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AFRICA DEFENSE FORUM

## HOLISTIC SECURITY

Security Forces Look Beyond the Battlefield for Solutions to Complex Challenges

Confronting the AI Threat

Urban Growth Tests Security

PLUS

A Conversation With Maj. Gen. Fructueux Gbaguidi, Benin's Chief of Defense Staff

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# features

- 8 Citizen-Centered Security**  
Through training and collaboration, militaries are transforming into protectors of the people
- 14 'Force Remains the Last Resort'**  
A conversation with Maj. Gen. Fructueux Gbaguidi, Benin's chief of defense staff
- 20 Holding the Line**  
Benin's Operation Mirador aims to turn back an onslaught of attacks along its northern border
- 26 Threats in the Machine**  
Terrorist groups are wielding artificial intelligence for recruiting and messaging; weaponization might be next
- 34 Loaded With Danger**  
Arms depots can pose catastrophic threats to civilians unless authorities maintain safety and security measures
- 40 Lessons Learned the Hard Way**  
A former Djiboutian peacekeeper shares lessons from a deployment with the African Union Mission in Somalia
- 46 Security Tested as Cities Grow**  
Africa's urban areas struggle to keep up with the world's largest population boom
- 50 Tragedy in the Crosshairs**  
Drone technology offers counterterror possibilities but requires safeguards and oversight

# departments

4 Viewpoint

5 African Perspective

6 Africa Today

32 African Heartbeat

56 Tools of the Trade

58 Future Force

60 Defense & Security

62 Keeping the Peace

64 Joining Hands

66 Flashback

67 Where Am I?



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## **ON THE COVER**

Members of the Kenya Defence Forces salute during a memorial ceremony for the chief of defense staff and nine other officers who died in an April 2024 helicopter crash.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**W**hat is security? It could mean access to food, shelter, health care, economic stability or protection from violence. Often it means all of the above.

Increasingly, militaries are taking a holistic approach to security provision. They know that their primary responsibility is to protect the citizens of the country, but that rarely can be done through military means alone. More often, complex problems require a response that addresses the root causes of insecurity.

In West Africa, for example, coastal nations face a growing threat from Sahel-based terrorist groups. These groups are determined to expand southward and form a caliphate that crosses borders.

In many coastal countries, terror groups target regions that are underdeveloped with little state presence. Terrorists capitalize on this by offering jobs and services, and by preaching an ideology that fans the flames of local grievances.

In response, militaries have recognized that providing security must include building trust with civilians. In Benin, the armed forces have launched civil-military committees that promote dialogue and hold events such as veterinary and health clinics. The outreach is part of a broader national strategy that includes provision of state services, investment in the region and an increased military presence to face down the terrorists. Similar efforts are underway in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. The goal is to build resilience in these border communities so they are no longer vulnerable to terrorist recruitment.

This is just one way that militaries are widening the scope of what they do. In Senegal, the Armed Forces sprang into action during historic flooding in 2024 to evacuate people, provide logistical support and distribute aid. The Kenya Defence Forces are stopping cattle rustling and shutting down the illegal weapons trade that fuels intercommunal violence. In Mauritania, camel-riding National Guard Soldiers known as Meharistes visit isolated communities and provide everything from clean water to medical care.

Holistic security cannot be a military-only strategy. Experience shows that when security forces are part of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort, results are better. By viewing insecurity from the perspective of the people they serve, governments, civil society groups and military professionals can offer results that are effective and long-lasting.

U.S. Africa Command Staff

Senegalese Soldiers set up a mobile hospital in Bakel, an area affected by flooding in 2024.

DIRPA



## Holistic Security

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# ‘Strengthening African Security, Sustaining Unity of Effort’



*Gen. Charles Muriu Kahariri, Kenya's chief of the defense forces, gave the opening remarks at the 2025 African Chiefs of Defense Conference in Nairobi on May 28. During the conference, senior military officials from across Africa discussed countering transnational threats, strengthening partnerships and sharing expertise. His remarks have been edited for length and clarity.*



Moroccan Brig. Gen. Abdelkrim Nejjar, left, speaks with Kenyan Lt. Gen. David Kimaiyo Chemwaina Tarus at the 2025 African Chiefs of Defense Conference in Nairobi.

LIBBY WEILER/U.S. AFRICA COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS



For those of us in the defense community, the African Chiefs of Defense

Conference has come to represent far more than a conference. It is a forum that enables us to align strategic thinking, strengthen our collective posture and reinforce the unity that underpins continental security. Its growing relevance reflects a shared recognition that our security challenges and their solutions are interconnected.

Our presence here today reaffirms this shared vision, a vision of an Africa that is secure, that is resilient and confident in its ability to shape its own future. This year's conference convenes when the regional and global security environment is becoming increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

Today our militaries have to contend with traditional and nontraditional threats, which are exacerbated by proliferation of technology. The prevailing security environment and easy access to sophisticated weapons has bred emboldened nonstate actors who actively challenge government forces through application of asymmetric strategies and tactics.

This has led to protracted conflict, making our region, and the globe at large, more insecure.

The contemporary security threats in Africa include internationalized internal armed conflicts, terrorism, cybersecurity threats and a myriad of maritime threats. They call for comprehensive strategies that address not only immediate threats but also the underlying political, economic and social factors contributing to instability across the continent.

In the prevailing circumstances, no single government agency nor state can effectively mitigate the threats because they are cross-cutting and transnational. Therefore, the theme of this conference, “Strengthening African Security, Sustaining Unity of Effort,” speaks directly to Africa’s current and future defense landscape. It brings into sharp focus key strategic imperatives that define our time and underscores the structural enablers of effective militaries, which include technological advancement, professional human capital, institutional partnerships in the form of multiagency operations, international partnerships, and thriving civil military relations.

These concepts reflect the lived realities of our respective nations and the aspirations of our peoples. They challenge us to evolve, to integrate more effectively across government institutions as well as between states and regions, and to ensure that our militaries remain guardians of territorial integrity, stability, dignity and progress of our peoples.

Although African countries have made efforts to develop their individual militaries, more needs to be done to integrate forces for effective joint bilateral and multilateral security operations so as to secure the continent at large. The key areas that need to be addressed include developing intelligence-sharing frameworks; standardization of training, equipment and operational doctrines; mobilization of resources to mitigate disparities and optimize capabilities; as well as developing comprehensive strategies to counter cyber threats and other emerging threats.

As co-host, the Kenya Defence Forces is deeply committed to supporting constructive engagement during this conference and beyond to address identified challenges.

We view this gathering as an opportunity to refine our common vision, renew our strategic partnerships and inspire innovations that will outlast this conference.

I therefore urge all of us to seize this opportunity to strengthen our shared resolve and elevate the role of our defense institutions in advancing peace, resilience and prosperity across Africa.



## Experts Urge ECOWAS, Sahel Alliance TO COLLABORATE IN TERRORISM FIGHT

ADF STAFF

**T**he departure of three Sahelian nations from ECOWAS in January 2025 has undercut counterterrorism efforts. Restoring that work will require overcoming mistrust between the nations and their neighbors, according to experts.

One starting point on that journey, according to analyst Eric Tevoedjre of Benin, might be a new diplomatic agreement between the Economic Community of West African States and Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, now operating as the Alliance of Sahel States (AES).

“Maintaining good relations with the AES states is a strategic imperative for ECOWAS,” Tevoedjre wrote for the Development and Cooperation website. “The offer of diplomatic recognition could significantly improve the situation.”

Military groups in the three Sahelian nations overthrew their democratically elected governments starting with a Malian coup in 2021. In 2024, the three countries’ leaders announced that they would form their own mutual defense pact. Alliance junta leaders pledged to defeat terrorists. So far, they have fared worse than their predecessors, and the region now leads the world in terrorism, according to the Global Terrorism Index.

Terrorism along the region’s porous borders threatens security in coastal states, particularly along the W-Arly-Pendjari wildlife park complex, which straddles Niger and Benin.

“Mistrust between the two organisations [ECOWAS and AES] prevents vital intelligence sharing and coordination of military operations to prevent certain territories from being used as fallback zones,” analyst Jeannine Ella Abatan wrote in March 2025 for the

Institute for Security Studies.

A few weeks before the AES nations separated from ECOWAS, Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) killed 30 Beninese Soldiers

at a base near the border with Burkina Faso and Niger. In April 2025, JNIM fighters killed at least 54 security personnel near W National Park. That same month, JNIM militants launched their first kamikaze drone attack on the Togolese military in the northern Savanes region.

JNIM seeks to create bases in coastal states from which it can launch attacks into Burkina Faso. “A lack of counterterrorism coordination between Benin and its Burkinabe and Nigerien neighbors has likely created security gaps and facilitated JNIM’s offensive,” Liam Karr wrote for the Critical Threats website.

“Because ECOWAS and AES will not fund counterterrorism initiatives together, their individual projects will likely be far less effective or simply not be undertaken due to prohibitive start-up costs,” analysts Michael Howard and Ethan Czaja wrote in *Small Wars Journal*.

At the 2025 African Chiefs of Defense summit in Nairobi, Kenya, top military leaders repeatedly emphasized the need to improve collective security efforts in areas such as West Africa.

Toward that end, ECOWAS and the AES must collaborate on their mutual threat from terrorism, Tevoedjre wrote. “Political recognition would mark the beginning of a new era and pave the way for self-determined African cooperation instead of confrontation.”

**Togolese gendarmes take part in an anti-terrorism exercise at the Peacekeeping Operations Training Center in Lomé.**

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# NIGERIAN SOLDIERS Kill 2 Top ISWAP Leaders ADF STAFF

**N**igerian Soldiers killed two top Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) leaders in as many weeks in May and June 2025 as part of the Army's ongoing Operation Hadin Kai.

On May 30, 2025, Army officials confirmed the death of Amir Abu Fatima, one of Nigeria's most wanted terrorists. Soldiers killed Fatima and two top lieutenants in Aleru village in Borno State, according to Premium Times. Authorities said he was captured alive but soon bled to death from his wounds sustained in a gunbattle. Fatima was thought to have coordinated ISWAP attacks in northern Borno.

Nigerian forces recovered AK-47 rifles, magazines, ordnance and materials for making improvised explosive devices without sustaining any casualties, the Army reported.

On June 9, Operation Hadin Kai forces launched a coordinated

air and ground operation in Borno State's Gujba Local Government Area. The operation killed ISWAP commander Ameer Malam Jidda and scores of his fighters, Premium Times reported.

"Malam Jidda, who was identified as the Ameer of Ngorgore and Malumti villages, met his end during a fierce engagement with troops, who overpowered the terrorists with superior firepower," according to a statement from Reuben Kovangiya, acting deputy director of Army Public Relations at Headquarters Theatre Command.

The statement said some terrorists escaped with gunshot wounds and others were neutralized when troops conducted an ambush operation during a follow-up in the Timbuktu Triangle, Premium Times reported.

Operation Hadin Kai is Nigeria's ongoing counterterrorism effort, which began in April 2021 when it replaced the six-year Operation Lafiya Dole.



Nigerian troops serving in Operation Hadin Kai await a visit from President Bola Tinubu in Maiduguri in 2023.  
AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE OFFER SPACE TO STUDY SECURITY CHALLENGES

ADF STAFF

**A**sk experts for solutions to Africa's many security challenges, and many are likely to call for more cooperation, training and professionalism for militaries. The path toward that goal leads through one of the continent's many centers of excellence.

Over the past 25 years or so, Africa has seen a boom in institutions designed to help military leaders understand and respond to key security issues such as artificial intelligence, counterterrorism, maritime security and empowering noncommissioned officers.

The centers are designed to develop leadership, expertise and best practices in specific fields. Some, such as the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization, have spent decades helping members collaborate. Others, such as South Africa's Defence Artificial Intelligence Research Unit, started in 2024, study the military implications of AI.

"Professionalism is very important," Maj. Gen. Davidson Forleh, chief of staff for the Armed Forces of Liberia, told ADF during the 2025 African Chiefs of Defense Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. "In the past, the military was looked at as a kind of beast."

Liberia reformed its military after civil wars in the 1990s, relying on the kind of training available at institutions such as the African Union Counter Terrorism Centre and the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre to build a professional military.

"Whether they address terrorism, maritime security, enhancing African peacekeeping missions or other issues, a lot of the solution sets to these national security



challenges require responses that have to go beyond kinetic actions," Catherine Lena Kelly, an expert on democratization and governance at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, told ADF.

**Centers of excellence are developing military expertise to address some of the continent's toughest security challenges.**

SGT. KYLEJIAN FRANCA/U.S. ARMY

Centers of excellence complement the work of military academies and defense universities by providing leaders with a space to share ideas with colleagues who face the same issues, Kelly said. Civilian experts bring a perspective on problems and solutions driven by academic research.

Forleh said the relationships leaders build while attending a center of excellence often translate into better cooperation among nations and militaries in the real world. He cited Liberia's work with Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone to patrol the western Gulf of Guinea.

Above all, centers of excellence expand the growing professionalism of militaries across Africa as lessons learned by high-ranking leaders spread through the ranks, Kelly said.



ADF ILLUSTRATION

# CITIZEN-CENTERED SECURITY

## Through Training and Collaboration, Militaries Are Transforming into Protectors of the People

ADF STAFF

**W**hen deadly floods swept through Gaborone, Botswana, in February 2025, the Botswana Defence Force swung into action, working alongside government agencies and nongovernmental organizations to protect the city's residents and restore order.

Soldiers employed their expertise in search and rescue, medical evacuation, and logistics to support their civilian counterparts during the natural disaster.

For Maj. Gen. Molefi Seikano, the response was a model for civil-military relations among African nations.

"It showed the military as a force for stability," Seikano told ADF at the 2025 African Chiefs of Defense Conference (ACHOD), where civil-military relations were a topic of discussion.

Across Africa, militaries are improving their communications and relations with civilian leaders and citizens. A growing number of military leaders have been actively involved in transforming their armed forces into organizations that protect and support their fellow citizens.

"There has been a dramatic transformation in training, in skills development, and in expanding the institutional and operational capacity of African armed forces from what they were previously," researcher Dr. Moses Khisa told ADF. Khisa is a research associate at the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala, Uganda, and writes a weekly column for Uganda's Daily Monitor newspaper. According to Khisa and his research partner Christopher Day, African societies face

the challenge of establishing protection both by the military and from the military. They do that by building institutions that are accountable to civilian leaders.

"This is the true crux of the civil-military conundrum in Africa," Day and Khisa wrote in their 2022 book, "Rethinking Civil-Military Relations in Africa."



When flash floods struck Gaborone, Botswana, members of the Botswana Defence Force deployed to help civil authorities and nongovernmental groups evacuate victims, recover vehicles and deliver humanitarian aid. REUTERS

The solution, they say, is not necessarily the same for every country. Some, such as Ghana or South Africa, might opt for a system that keeps the military separate from the political sphere,



Members of the Malawi Defence Force joined civilians to recover the bodies of people killed in flooding caused by Tropical Cyclone Freddy in 2023. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

An emphasis on training in civil-military relations has helped African militaries create professional forces dedicated to serving their citizens and staying subordinate to democratically elected civilian leaders.

STAFF SGT. ALLYSON L. MANNERS/ U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD

## CIVIL-MILITARY PARADIGM SHIFT

The focus on greater civil-military relations has been decades in the making. At its heart is a generation of military leaders who have learned from the political and social upheaval caused by decades of coups and civil wars.

“In the past, the armed forces were seen as a source of insecurity, as predators,” Khisa told ADF. “They had a predatory persona and a predatory reputation.”

That predatory nature still exists in parts of the continent where corruption and human rights abuses are tolerated. But military leaders, such as Maj. Gen. Davidson Forleh, chief of staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia, stress that they represent the old way of thinking.

“The new military is different from the past,” Forleh told ADF.

while others, such as Rwanda and Uganda, might bring the two institutions so close together that they are virtually intertwined.

Regardless of how civil-military relationships develop, the most successful armed forces believe that their job is to protect the people. This credo was articulated at the ACHOD conference by Maj. Gen. Guy Blanchard Okoi, chief of the general staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of the Congo: “The human being is at the center of everything.”

Forleh was among the first class of recruits to join Liberia's military when it was re-created after the country's civil war that ended in 2003. The reformed armed forces emphasizes professionalism, peacekeeping, and patrolling its maritime environment and its land borders in collaboration with its neighbors.

Liberia's neighbor Sierra Leone has a similar history of military reform after a civil war. Protecting civilians is the key to the military's mandate, according to Sierra Leonean authorities.

"For countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone, they're distinct in that they were just smoldering craters of civil war where there was a pretty big effort to reform their security institutions," Day, who spent time in Sierra Leone during the civil war, told ADF. In such cases, reforming civil-military relations might require the complete rebuilding of security forces, Day said.

"But it also has to do with accountability at the top," he added. "There has to be visible accountability."

## BUILDING TRUST

As militaries work to strengthen their relationship with citizens and civilian leaders, they face another challenge: building trust.

"We have to work in an environment where there is less distrust," Lt. Gen. Mbaye Cissé, Senegal's chief of defense staff, told his colleagues at the ACHOD conference.

That may mean starting a dialogue with nongovernmental organizations, civilian leaders and legislators to build connections between them and the military. Doing so can lay the groundwork for those moments when both sides of the civil-military relationship are called into action.

Senegal provides an example of how a successful civil-military relationship can work. When the military was called upon to rein in separatists in the southern Casamance region, leaders did not start with the Army, Cissé said.

"We used NGOs to do the peacebuilding," he added. "The Army can't do peacebuilding without the participation of civil society organizations."



Nigerian Soldiers speak with civilians while hunting for suspected Islamic State West Africa Province terrorists in the community of Tungushe. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“When senior officers go out there and see what’s going on in other countries, they come back home with a different attitude and perception of what their role should be.”

– Dr. Moses Khisa, research associate at the Centre for Basic Research in Kampala, Uganda

When you talk about security, military forces think they’re the only ones who are important.”

Building trust can be difficult on a continent where military leaders remain willing and able to overthrow their civilian governments, however. Coups in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger — along with the civil war in Sudan — cast a shadow over the promise of better civil-military relations among African nations.

The number of successful coups has plummeted from more than two dozen per decade between the 1960s and 1990s (the peak decade with 35 coups) to fewer than 10 a decade in the 2000s and 2010s, according to Day and Khisa.

“The decline in coups d’etat has unfolded in tandem with major changes in regional norms that proscribe military interference in domestic politics,” Day and Khisa wrote.

## PEACEKEEPING AND PROFESSIONALISM

The rise in cordial civil-military relations has coincided with two other changes: less tolerance for coups among the continent’s leaders and a greater emphasis on African-led peacekeeping missions.

The African Union predecessor, the Organization of African Unity, had a reputation for being agnostic about how a nation’s leaders came to power, Day said.

“The OAU created permission for coups,” Day said. “There were not proscriptions for how anybody became president. Now, you get suspended if you have a coup.”

The AU’s more aggressive stance toward keeping order on the continent has led to a growing number of African-led missions, such as the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad region.

“Peacekeeping is one of the most underrated aspects of what we’re talking about,” Khisa said. “It’s incredibly important.”

Troops participating in the MNJTF, for example, are trained in civil-military cooperation

(CIMIC) that prepares Soldiers to engage constructively with civilians facing displacement, mistrust of the military and humanitarian crises.

“Given the nature of the threat — an asymmetric insurgency operating among civilian populations — military force alone has proven insufficient,” MNJTF officials wrote in an email to ADF. “CIMIC enables Soldiers to understand local dynamics, build relationships with civilians, and coordinate more effectively with humanitarian agencies. These capabilities are not just ‘soft skills,’ but essential tools for mission success.”

Along with providing MNJTF troops a tactical advantage, CIMIC also can transform the force’s image and impact in the region and serve as a foundation for broader regional stability, enabling communities to rebuild and resist future threats, task force officials said.

In some cases, peacekeeping missions have served as a warning to African military leaders about the destruction that could result from violating the civil-military relationship, Khisa said.

“When senior officers go out there and see what’s going on in other countries, they come back home with a different attitude and perception of what their role should be,” Khisa said, adding that Ghanaian peacekeepers who served in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide are an example of that change.

“When you read about their experience, it left an indelible, enduring impact on how they perceived the role of the armed forces in their country,” Khisa said. “That was that the military should not be disruptive. It should not lead Ghana into the kind of crisis they saw in Rwanda.”

## PROVIDING FOR POLICE

As African nations improve the relationship between their militaries and civilians, one aspect of the security sector continues to be overlooked: local police. In Nigeria, for example, the military is dispatched to deal with issues such as extreme



Staff officers from the Multinational Joint Task Force visit children at an orphanage in N'Djamena, Chad.

MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE

civic unrest for which the police, as the security institution responsible for domestic law enforcement, would be more appropriate.

Nigeria's police do not have the training or resources to handle large-scale events of insecurity, impeding their ability to respond to large events, according to researchers retired Brig. Gen. Saleh Bala and Mvemba Phezo Dizolele, a senior associate with the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Sending the military into Africa's rapidly growing cities in the place of police can cause problems, Bala and Dizolele wrote in a report for CSIS.

"In some communities, the military is seen as the enemy," the authors wrote. "In others, people still welcome the military as an assurance that they will be protected."

Investing more in local police forces could help improve security while keeping the military focused on its mandate of safeguarding the nation from foreign threats, Catherine Lena Kelly, director

of engagement at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, told ADF. Community-based policing can complement the military's national defense role by identifying and disrupting terrorist groups and promoting deradicalization efforts, Kelly said.

"Community policemen and women can be a strong resource for that," Kelly said. "In an ideal world, the police would exhibit a level of professionalism equal to what the military exhibits."

Observers say the ongoing shift in civil-military relations across Africa promises to bring more stability to a continent long marred by coups and social upheaval. Extensive training opportunities and a dedication to keeping the military accountable to democratically elected leaders are transforming Africa's armed forces into institutions that protect their citizens rather than prey on them.

"In the past, the military was looked at as a kind of beast," said Forleh of Liberia. "We've shifted the entire military to be a force for good." □

# ‘FORCE REMAINS THE LAST RESORT’





A CONVERSATION WITH  
**MAJ. GEN.**  
**FRUCTUEUX GBAGUIDI**  
**BENIN'S CHIEF OF DEFENSE STAFF**

*Maj. Gen. Fructueux Gbaguidi, an Army officer with more than 35 years of experience, has studied and trained at institutions in France, Madagascar, Senegal and the United States. During his career in the Beninese Armed Forces (FAB), he served as commander of the 1st Combat Company of Benin's Rapid Intervention Battalion, aide-de-camp to the chief of the general staff and commander of the 2nd Combined Arms Battalion. He held leadership roles at the National Higher Training School for the Army and the National School for Non-Commissioned Officers. He served as chief of army staff from 2016 to 2022 before being named to his current role. In September 2025, he was approved for induction into the International Hall of Fame of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. He spoke to ADF by video from his office in Cotonou. This conversation has been edited for space and clarity and translated from the original French.*

**ADF:** Historically, Benin has not faced threats from terrorist groups. This changed in 2019 when tourists were kidnapped in a national park. In the years after, the threat has only grown. Can you describe how Benin came to be targeted by Sahel-based terror groups and how this threat has affected the country?

**GBAGUIDI:** Benin has always been a peaceful country, but unfortunately in 2021 we began to experience attacks. For a long time, the enemy arrived in Benin in a secretive manner, unarmed or sometimes with hidden weapons. And when I say enemy, I mean terrorists. Initially, they didn't make Benin their primary target; they were more concerned with the ability to strike in the Sahel. Evidently, in search of better lines of communication, in search of more space, they began to attack us. As you described, there was the kidnapping of tourists, and



instead of continuing to be a transit zone, Benin became a target because their goal was to enable the trafficking necessary to fuel these groups. This includes cigarette trafficking, gasoline trafficking, gold trafficking, and various trafficking activities, including drugs. The deployment of our forces disrupted the enemy, and this trafficking became more difficult for them. Therefore, they had to attack us in order to militarily conquer these areas.

So that's how we became the target of the Sahel terrorists.

**ADF:** In 2022, Benin created Operation Mirador. Can you describe why it was created, its goal and what it has accomplished?

**GBAGUIDI:** We had several operations underway: operations to confront the illegal mining and operations to combat the transit of trafficked goods. Understanding that all these illegal activities had the same goal — to destabilize our country — we decided to implement a unified operation that we called Mirador. It was essentially about surveillance, and when you're on a

Gbaguidi speaks to Soldiers serving in Operation Mirador in northern Benin. FORCES ARMEES BENINOISES



A First lieutenant from the Benin 1st Commando Parachute Battalion calibrates his binoculars before a field training exercise in Ouassa. U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AFRICA

watchtower or a “mirador,” you’re monitoring. So, we unified all the commands in the North to create a single operation with a theater commander. The theater is divided into three major zones: the Northern Zone, which is the Alibori department; the Western Zone, which is the Atacora department; and the Eastern Zone, which is the border with Nigeria, that is, Borgou. It’s a principle of warfare: The unity of combat allows us to facilitate the transmission and execution of the orders I transmit to the various units on the ground. The whole thing is under the command of two theater commanders who change periodically, each with their own headquarters. But there is a central headquarters in Parakou. This is the headquarters of Operation Mirador. The objective is to secure the northern areas of Benin, particularly the parks that seem to be the preferred zones of terrorist groups.

**ADF:** You mentioned the W-Arly-Pendjari complex of parks. Can you describe how terrorists and traffickers are infiltrating the parks and what must be done to return them to stability?

**GBAGUIDI:** Yes, these groups need places to hide, and the undergrowth and forests are ideal places for them to move around. They move in small groups, often on motorcycles, sometimes even on foot. They are very resilient. They move from camp to camp, carrying just the bare minimum. They are fortunate to have shelter because in Africa, when you see a stranger arrive, even if you don’t necessarily know them, you give them food and shelter, and you don’t report them even if

you think they’re of poor moral character. That’s what allows them to move from place to place and to regroup to conduct their operations. We address this threat in several ways because we must take a holistic approach to the situation. For us, the military approach is the last resort. We try to communicate with the various village chiefs, with the various traditional leaders. Using force remains the last resort.

**“WE DON’T SEE THINGS IN TERMS OF ALL-OUT WAR. WE SEE IT IN TERMS OF NEEDING DIVERSE APPROACHES.”**

**ADF:** What is being done to dismantle trafficking networks and disrupt the illicit economy that funds terror groups?

**GBAGUIDI:** We don’t see things in terms of all-out war. We see it in terms of needing diverse approaches. First, we try to identify what might cause the frustrations of the population because these frustrations constitute the breeding ground that terrorists use to organize and to be successful on the ground. We identify these frustrations, but also the crucial needs of the population, particularly in terms of public services, health and roads. These roads open up areas so that very

quickly — and the government understood this early on — we can reach out to these populations, possibly providing them with public services so that these needs do not create the breeding ground on which terrorist groups rely to be successful. We only use force as a last resort. It is when we are attacked that we generally respond. But, in general, we try to prioritize dialogue, to ensure that people can talk to each other and avoid a situation where force precedes dialogue.

**ADF:** Two of Benin's northern neighbors, Burkina Faso and Niger, have experienced military coups and have decreased political and military cooperation with West African nations. How would you describe the collaboration between the FAB and the militaries from its northern neighbors? How important is cooperation with these countries to securing shared borders?

**GBAGUIDI:** Regarding the coups in the Sahel, the countries are sovereign, and they decided to withdraw from ECOWAS [the Economic Community of West African States]. It's a completely sovereign decision that I won't comment on. However, among Soldiers, you know, we still continue to have exchanges. In Beninese schools, there are trainees from the countries you mentioned, notably Niger, Burkina Faso and many other African countries, because our vision of pan-Africanism is to be with all Africans and to make life easier for Africans. We seek cooperation, and they are our brothers in arms. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. I'm convinced that, over time, things will return to normal. But it's important that we can talk to each other and that we can work together to confront terrorism, because terrorism is precisely what crosses

our borders. When you consider their area of operation, it's the borders, the gray areas that we have difficulty controlling. Terrorist groups work in synergy; they know no borders; they work in networks. So, if we remain isolated, we all lose. That's why, when I took command, I visited all the countries that border Benin to explain my vision of things in that we must continue to exchange information, particularly in terms of intelligence, mutual support and prosecutions on each other's territory. I was understood initially, but as you said, there is a new situation. This new situation hasn't completely destroyed everything, but there is room for improvement in the sense that we could better understand each other to be able to confront the terrorists.

**ADF:** How has the FAB worked to build trust with civilians in the affected northern communities? How does civilian outreach help the counterterrorism mission?

**GBAGUIDI:** We maintain constant synergy with the civilian population. We exchange information; we talk to them. We explain the latest security situation to them and maintain this dialogue to explain whenever something changes. We also conduct civil-military actions with these populations to win hearts and minds, as we often say. The approach in the fight against terrorism must be a general one; it must be a comprehensive approach; and, first and foremost, it is the civilian population that we must support so that they understand that we are not at war with anyone and that we are only safeguarding the integrity of our territory. One of the actions we have also carried out is to recruit in these communities, because they know the terrain. The young people we recruit from these



Gbaguidi speaks to Soldiers serving in Operation Mirador in northern Benin.

FORCES ARMÉES BENINOISES

border communities know their brothers and sisters, they know the people there, and we are accepted when we arrive in these areas when we speak the same languages as these people. There are also civil-military actions. We conduct vaccination sessions, whether for men or for cattle, for herds, flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, etc. We treat the people. We bring what is really lacking in these areas so that the people understand that we are on their side and that this is all about protecting Benin and nothing else.

**ADF:** What role do you think civilians can play in defeating terror? Do you think they can be effectively trained as guards, vigilantes or as an early warning network that can alert authorities to threats in remote areas?

**GBAGUIDI:** You know, Benin has neither eternal enemies nor permanent allies. We do things by using situational intelligence, and the civilian population is the most important part of the fight against terrorism since they are the ones most directly impacted. That's why we prioritize reaching out to these populations directly, and that's why they come to talk to us spontaneously whenever there's a change in the sociology of their area — when there are new people who come to settle, even when the arrivals are simple refugees. We know about it immediately after it happens because the people understand that this fight impacts them first. While we are respecting human rights, respecting the various established rules, we are convinced we will continue to win the hearts of our public so that this just fight we are waging in the name of Benin has a positive impact on them and does not disrupt their daily lives.

**ADF:** In 2015, Benin joined the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) even though it is not in the Lake Chad Basin. Why did the country believe it was important to be part of this coalition?

**GBAGUIDI:** In strategy, the one who has the best chance to succeed is the one who understands what is coming, the one who anticipates.

The groups that plague the Lake Chad Basin are the same groups that are attacking us in Benin today. So, the political leaders of the moment had the presence of mind and the intelligence to understand the situation and to say to themselves, "We must anticipate and reach out to the brothers who are fighting in Lake Chad." Because we felt that this threat was going to expand and reach down to us. And that is the case today. So it is in anticipation that we decided to join the MNJTF. We are still there, and we are taking an increasingly prominent place there. In the coming days, a new sector will be in Benin, that is to say, eastern Benin, because the groups that are active in Lake Chad are coming down to the northeast of Benin to strike. It was a proactive measure that brought us into the MNJTF. It was meant to avoid the spillover, this spillover that has not yet been decisively stopped, but has been slowed down and has not come with the violence with which it invaded other countries. We hope that in the coming years, the coming months, the coming weeks, we will do much better in the fight against terrorism.

**ADF:** Despite the efforts of the FAB, the terror threat shows no signs of weakening. What needs to be done on a national and regional level to respond to this threat?



A Beninese platoon lieutenant uses a sand table diagram to discuss squad assignments during training.

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AFRICA



Soldiers from Benin's 1st Commando Parachute Battalion prepare to cross a danger area during ambush training in Ouassa.

U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND AFRICA

## **“WE’RE IN AN ASYMMETRIC WAR, AND THERE ARE TERRORISTS INVOLVED, SO THAT MAKES IT A WAR THAT’S DOUBLY UNCLEAR.”**

**GBAGUIDI:** We’re in an asymmetric war, and there are terrorists involved, so that makes it a war that’s doubly unclear. These are groups that strike and then withdraw back into the shadows. We must first build up our strength at the national level and then seek synergy with neighboring countries to prevent terrorist groups from having the chance to withdraw to one country after operating in another. First, it’s a national strategy that includes civilian populations to effectively address it at the national level. At a second level, it’s a regional organization, as I’ve always worked to create. It’s not necessary to have a regional force; it’s enough to have a regional agreement with common strategies, with defined objectives, with well-matched goals. When all of this is in place, terrorism will have less and less of a chance. I believe that it is first of all about giving ourselves the means at the national level and then seeking international synergy to be able to prevent terrorism from spreading from one border to another.

**ADF:** What do you think needs to be done in the coming years to further modernize and professionalize the FAB? What are your main goals?

**GBAGUIDI:** We have several major lines of operation to build the Army we want. The first line of operation is unifying our human resources and ensuring that the units that intervene are truly specialized and experienced in the task at hand, so that we can decisively prevent the enemy from seizing the initiative.

The second line of operation is equipment. We are continuing to equip ourselves because four years ago, we weren’t at this level. We were very far from where we are today. We must continue to equip the FAB and train them on the equipment we acquire so that they can accomplish their missions.

The third line of operation is a major one. It’s the decisive role that the local population must play. And that relates to the interaction we have with them; it’s our ability to provide them with the services they need, it’s our ability to meet their needs that will prevent them from living in destitution and giving terrorists the chance to come and overthrow them. It means making them more connected, providing them with primary care, allowing them to find housing, food and health care. If these lines of operation are properly followed, I believe that terrorism has very little chance of thriving. □

A photograph of a soldier in camouflage gear and a tan cap, holding a blue assault rifle. He is in a crouched position, looking towards the right. In the foreground, the lower leg and black boot of another soldier in camouflage are visible, lying on the ground. The background consists of green foliage and a dirt path.

# HOLDING THE LINE



## **BENIN'S OPERATION MIRADOR**

AIMS TO TURN BACK  
AN ONSLAUGHT OF  
ATTACKS ALONG ITS  
NORTHERN BORDER

ADF STAFF



**IN** a grueling, eight-day exercise spread across three departments in Benin's southern zone, members of the National Guard were pushed to their limits.

They rescued hostages, put down insurrections and warded off ambushes. They rappelled from cliffs, navigated high rope courses and dropped from helicopters hovering over water.

The scenarios were fictional, but the real test was coming soon. Many of the 560 Soldiers training in July 2025 were expected to deploy to the north of the country to take part in Operation Mirador, Benin's military mission to contain a growing terror threat.

Beninese Soldiers from the 1st Commando Parachute Battalion train in Ouassa alongside U.S. Special Forces. U.S. AIR FORCE

“They are training and developing the reflexes necessary to confront incidents that we face on the ground,” Col. Faizou Gomina, head of the National Guard, said. “Naturally, this will allow personnel to be battle-hardened before their deployment to the operational zone, which is expected in the coming weeks.”

The stakes couldn’t be higher for the country, which is facing an existential threat from Sahel-based terrorism. Benin has suffered a steady rise in attacks since 2019, when terrorists kidnapped a guide and two tourists from Pendjari National Park. In 2024, the country suffered 153 fatalities linked to terrorist attacks. In 2025, that number was expected to grow, including two gruesome attacks that killed more than 80 Soldiers at military installations.

The recurring attacks made it clear that terrorists, most notably Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), are determined to establish a base inside the country. Benin’s coastal neighbors Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo also are facing a wave of incursions from Sahel-based groups. The violence has shaken a nation that had not experienced a terror attack for the first six decades of its existence but is now the 26th-most terror-impacted country in the world.

“The scope of the attacks and the number of deaths on the Beninese side had the effect of a shock wave because we are not accustomed to this level of violence,” Beninese researcher Oswald Padonou told Jeune Afrique. “It gives the feeling of a loss of control.”

### MIRADOR TAKES SHAPE

Launched in 2022, Operation Mirador is meant to strengthen the military presence along Benin’s northern borders with Burkina Faso and Niger. It is designed to restore security to the

W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP) Complex of parks that straddle the three nations and are a haven for terror groups and traffickers.

Mirador is made up of about 3,000 Soldiers positioned in eight forward operating bases and advanced fortified positions across the north. Additional troops rotate through the affected regions seasonally, and there are local security guards trained to support intelligence gathering. The Beninese Armed Forces (FAB) also created a National Guard and a Special Forces unit to support the operation.

The Armed Forces has partnered with other countries to obtain equipment such as helicopters, drones and armored vehicles for the fight. Benin increased its defense budget by 60% between 2022 and 2024 and announced a special recruitment drive to grow the military’s force by 5,000.

“All these investments are with the objective of allowing a fast and easy projection of our men on the theaters requiring their intervention,” Benin President Patrice Talon said in a 2022 address to the nation. “To be clear, it means fortifying the country and guaranteeing optimal security for all.”

The mission has recorded some successes. In February 2025, the Army repelled an attack and killed 17 terrorists threatening the town of Banikoara. Soldiers also have dismantled terror cells operating in Pendjari National Park and confiscated weapons, bomb-making material, phones and walkie-talkies.

But the gains have come at a steep cost. By one estimate, 217 Soldiers have

**National Guard members take part in Bouclier, an intense, large-scale exercise in southern Benin designed to prepare Soldiers for deployment to the north.**

**Right: The Beninese Armed Forces hosts a veterinary clinic for herders in Pingou, Nodi and Dassari.**

FORCES ARMEES BENOISES





died in combat in the north since the operation began. The April 17, 2025, JNIM attack that killed 54 Soldiers led to an outpouring of emotion and criticism from the public.

But some say even the losses are evidence that jihadists are facing stiff resistance as they try to push south. “Our mission is not to wait for the threat to arrive,” Col. Raoufou Assouma, commander of the Joint Tactical Group in the West Zone, told *Le Monde*. “We must go and flush it out and neutralize it wherever it is.”

### **GAINING CIVILIAN SUPPORT**

From the beginning, the FAB recognized that it would not win the fight with military force alone. Benin’s remote north is underdeveloped with few

roads and bridges, little industry and scant access to basic services such as medical care. People in the region are mistrustful of the central government. Terror groups, including some sharing ethnic ties with the people, try to take advantage of this.

“The sense of abandonment is so strong that the terrorists are often seen as saviors because of the masses of money they spend on, for example, a well in a village or to pay young people for their work,” sociologist Paul Affanmin told *Le Point*.

The FAB has sought to change this perception through veterinary events to treat herders’ livestock, free medical clinics and listening sessions to promote dialogue with civilians.

**A Beninese Soldier from the 1st Commando Parachute Battalion covers his sector during Joint Combined Exercise Training in Ouassa.**

U.S. AIR FORCE

**“STAY CALM. DO THE JOB AS YOU’VE BEEN DOING IT, IF NOT BETTER, IN KEEPING WITH OUR HONOR AS SOLDIERS. YOU ARE THE BEST.”**

~ Beninese Chief of Defense Staff Maj. Gen. Fructueux Gbaguidi



A police officer and a Soldier from Benin stop a motorcyclist at a checkpoint outside Porga near the border of Burkina Faso.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In May 2025, veterinarians treated 4,000 cattle in several villages of Materi, and doctors offered medical care to 1,700 patients in Atacora.

“For a long time the myth of the uniform frightened people,” Fortunet Alain Nouatin, Benin’s minister of defense, said. “It is necessary for the Army to put itself at the heart of the population. With free medical events, it wins the sympathy of the population and, in an indirect way, it gives them confidence in us so they can provide useful information.”

The Armed Forces has formed civil-military committees in coordination with local officials and traditional leaders. The committees offer a venue for the public to help the military identify security priorities and allow people to voice concerns or offer advice. At the first committee meeting in the town of Atacora in June 2025, one stakeholder said the idea behind the event was to “construct security together, to listen, act and move forward collectively.”

“These projects are the expression of a desire to restore confidence between the defense forces and the communities in the spirit of complementing each other and co-constructing security,” Lt. Mardochée Avlessi, a military doctor in charge of the civil-military committee in Materi, told Le Point.

The military and government efforts undergird international programs to support the border regions, including the World Bank-funded Gulf of Guinea Northern Regions Social Cohesion Project. This \$33 million program is designed to build resilience in border communities by improving services and food security, and promoting land reform. The project is estimated to support more than half a million people in Benin.

## A FRACTURED REGION

Fractured security partnerships in the Sahel have hampered Benin’s fight against terrorism. After coups, Niger and Burkina Faso left the Economic Community of West African States, leaving Benin with limited ability to collaborate or share intelligence with its northern neighbors. Beninese forces no longer have the right to pursue terrorists who flee across borders. Beninese officials fumed that terror groups have “total liberty” for more than 100 kilometers inside the territory of Burkina Faso. They can launch attacks and retreat to safety without fear of pursuit.

“Our situation would be easier if we had better cooperation with the countries that surround us,” Benin’s government spokesperson Wilfried Houngbédji told Le Point. “If, on the other side of the border, there was an effort at least like ours these attacks would not unfold like this.”

Sahel security researcher Seidik Abba believes

terror groups are intentionally instigating mistrust between neighboring countries.

“The terrorists know that there are difficulties between the different countries in the region, and they benefit from that to advance their agenda,” Abba told the BBC. “It’s in the best interest of the jihadists to make the threat transnational, a challenge that goes beyond one lone border.”

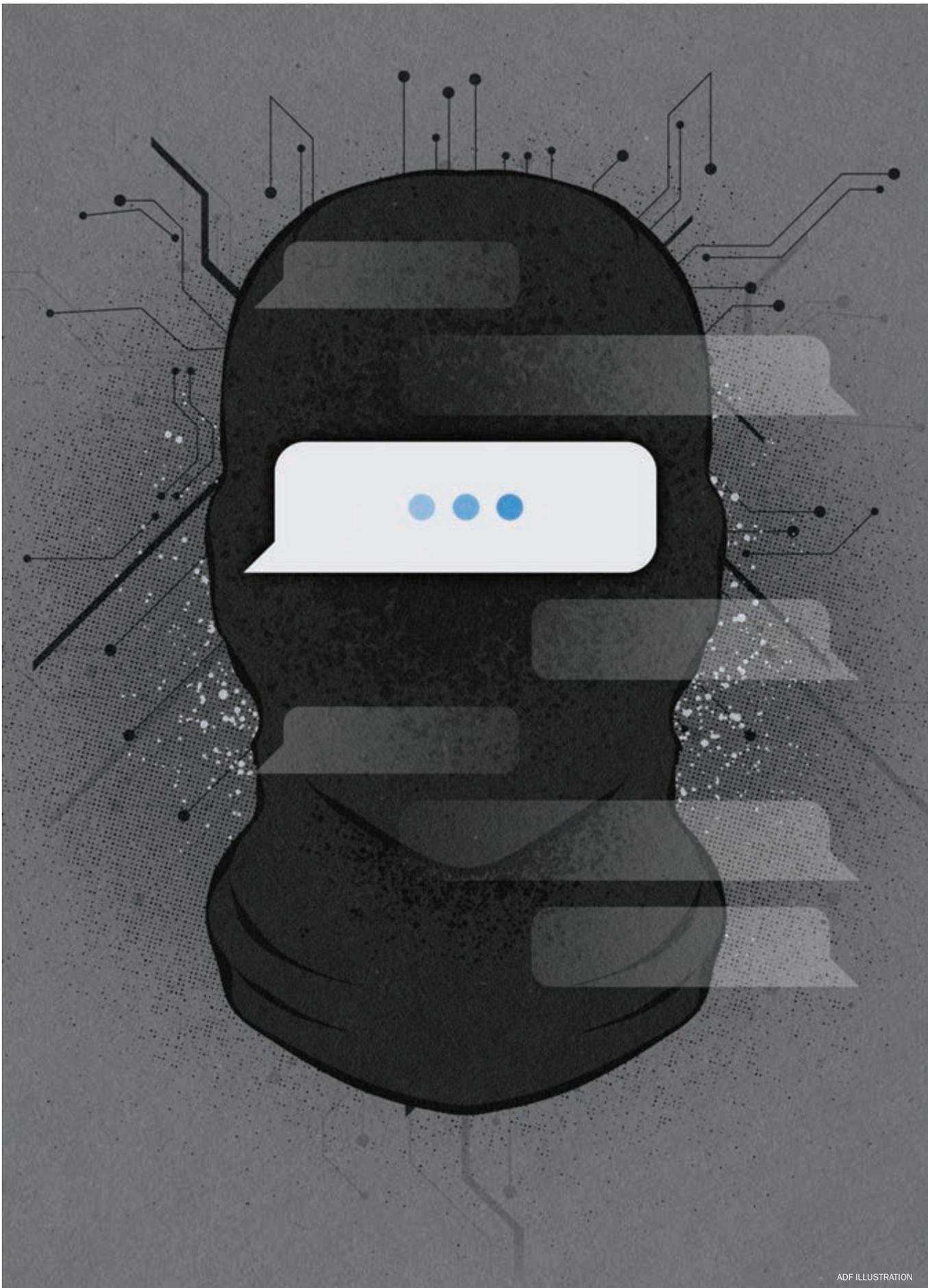


Benin’s military holds a free medical clinic in Taiacou as part of the civil-military committees created by Operation Mirador to support people in northern Benin. FORCES ARMÉES BÉNINOISES

The WAP complex sprawls across 27,000 square kilometers in all three countries. Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED) shows that between 2023 and 2025, JNIM consolidated gains in eastern Burkina Faso and southwest Niger, including the park, using the area as a staging ground to push south. ACLED warned that without military cooperation and coordination the expansion could continue and “fundamentally reshape the security landscape in this subregion.”

FAB leaders know that their responsibility with Mirador is to stop this southward push of extremists at all costs. During a 2024 visit to the front line, Beninese Chief of Defense Staff Maj. Gen. Fructueux Gbaguidi exhorted the Soldiers to keep up the fight.

“Stay calm. Do the job as you’ve been doing it, if not better, in keeping with our honor as Soldiers. You are the best,” Gbaguidi said. “When we see what is happening in the sub-region, when we see your capacity for resilience, your ability to face these challenges, for me there are no better than you. We have to maintain the tempo, maintain this momentum. Bon courage. The fight continues.” □



ADF ILLUSTRATION

# THREATS IN THE MACHINE

## TERRORIST GROUPS ARE WIELDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR RECRUITING AND MESSAGING; WEAPONIZATION MIGHT BE NEXT

ADF STAFF

Islamic State group and al-Qaida terrorists have been tapping social media technology for more than a decade to recruit and spread propaganda to a global audience. Now they and other groups are leveraging new tools that can supercharge messaging and possibly help perpetrate attacks.

Artificial intelligence lets terrorists churn out slickly produced propaganda that proliferates across various platforms while requiring few people and limited resources. Voice-cloning



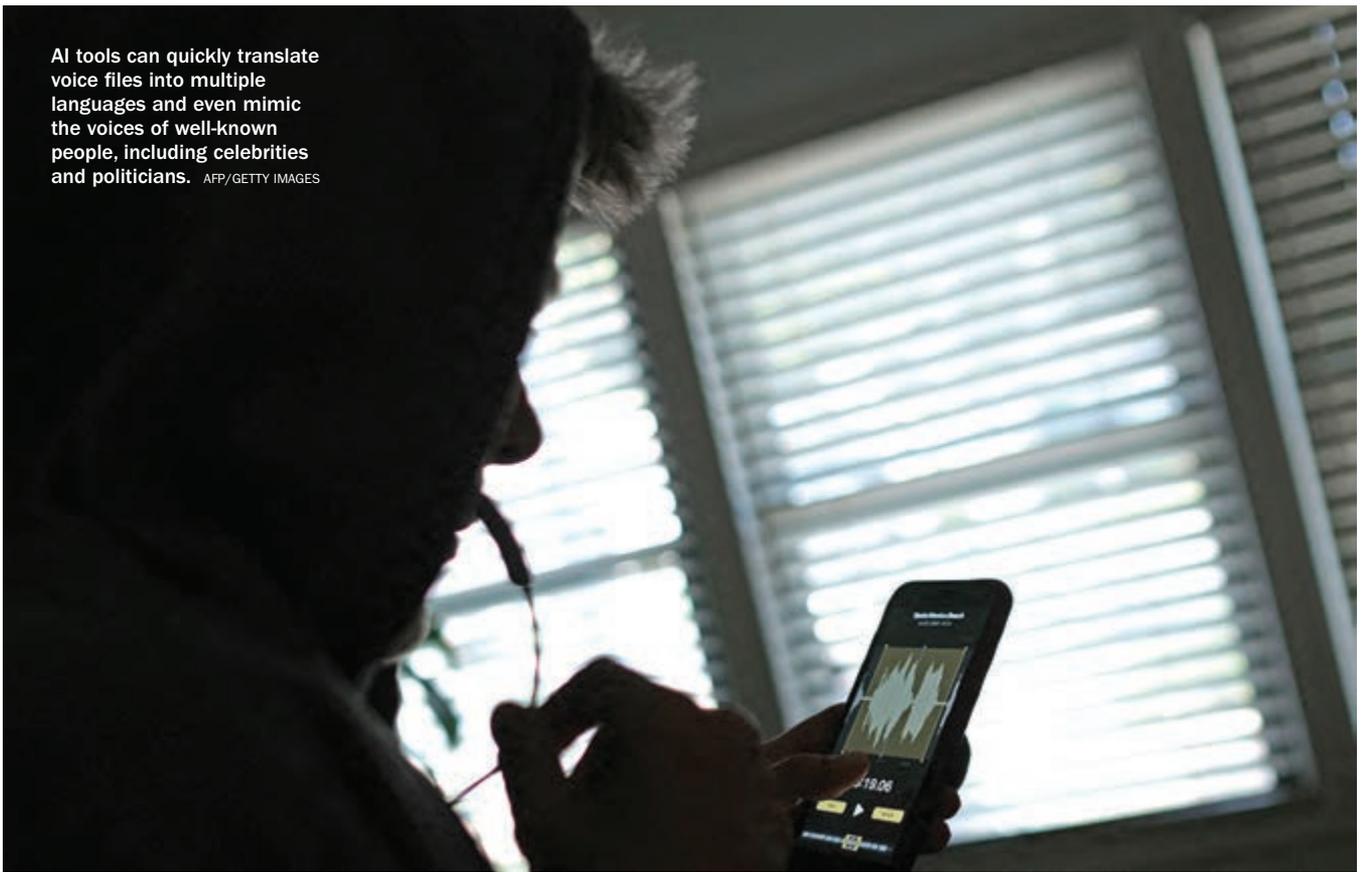
Terrorists and criminals were early adopters of social media applications. Likewise, they have been quick to employ AI apps to enhance their social media use. ADF ILLUSTRATION

**“Unlike human recruiters, AI-based chatbots can operate continuously across multiple platforms, engaging in conversations that mimic human interactions. The danger of passive recruitment with the malign use of AI is extreme.”**

~ Fabrizio Minniti, researcher for the Military Centre for Strategic Studies

technology, video and photo manipulation, and generative text capability all help terrorists distort reality and bend it toward new meaning, replacing the tedious tasks of typing long screeds and producing videos from scratch.

AI tools can quickly translate voice files into multiple languages and even mimic the voices of well-known people, including celebrities and politicians. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



## The same tools now used by terrorists also can be used by their supporters, thus multiplying and magnifying the reach of extremist messaging with little to no cost or effort.

AI technology can easily put words in the mouths of real-life celebrities, politicians and other notable people. Free AI-powered computer applications can mimic voices, create movie-quality video clips and empower terrorists to create fake news reports. This can transform the spread of

**“The question prevails. Are our defenses evolving as fast as AI-powered threats?”**

~ **Abdul-Hakeem Ajjola** of Nigeria, chair of the African Union Cyber Security Expert Group

propaganda and bolster recruitment.

“Unlike human recruiters, AI-based chatbots can operate continuously across multiple platforms, engaging in conversations that mimic human interactions,” according to an April 11, 2025, Global Network on Extremism and Technology (GNET) article by Fabrizio Minniti. These AI chatbots also can analyze behavior and adapt their responses based on a person’s ideology and vulnerabilities. “The danger of passive recruitment with the malign use of AI is extreme,” he wrote.

AI is so new and its capabilities so varied that few if any countries have policies or responses ready to confront the threats it presents. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies held six webinars from February to April 2025 to address challenges and opportunities presented by AI. “The question prevails,” said Abdul-Hakeem Ajjola of Nigeria, chair of the African Union Cyber Security Expert Group, during a February 21 webinar. “Are our defenses evolving as fast as AI-powered threats?”

# TERRORIST APPLICATIONS OF GENERATIVE AI

Tech Against Terrorism has come up with classifications of risks posed by terrorists' use of generative AI.



## Media spawning

Terrorists can generate thousands of malicious variants from a single image or video that can circumvent automated detection mechanisms.



## Automated multilingual translation

After publishing a message, terrorists could translate text-based propaganda into multiple languages, thus overwhelming manual detection efforts.



## Fully synthetic propaganda

Terrorists could generate completely artificial content such as speeches, images and interactive environments meant to overwhelm moderation efforts.



## Variant recycling

Terrorists could use generative AI to repurpose old propaganda in a way that could evade previous detection efforts.



## Personalized propaganda

AI tools could customize messaging to better target recruitment of specific demographics.



## Subverting moderation

AI could design propaganda that is specifically engineered to bypass moderation efforts.

Although generative AI poses risks in terrorists' hands, it also provides opportunities to stay ahead of the threat. Cooperation and innovation will help officials understand AI vulnerabilities and provide proactive solutions to mitigate the threats.

Source: Tech Against Terrorism

ADF ILLUSTRATION

## A 'GIFT' FOR TERRORISTS

Social media platforms give AI-generated posts an automatic global reach and the capacity to go viral, which often happens with more benign humorous memes and videos. Terrorist groups have no qualms about setting up shop on apps famous for dance fads and frothy videos, such as TikTok. Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) already are using the platform in the Lake Chad Basin to host live programs and answer user questions, Bulama Bukarti, a security analyst with the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, told Channels Television.

**“Productions that once took weeks, even months to make their way through teams of writers, editors, video editors, translators, graphic designers, or narrators can now be created with AI tools by one person in hours.”**

~ Rita Katz, director and co-founder of the SITE Intelligence Group



ChatGPT is just one of a growing number of easily accessible apps that can be used in terrorist propaganda and social media messaging. ADF ILLUSTRATION

A May 2024 SITE Intelligence Group report by Rita Katz said it is hard to overstate what a gift AI is for terrorists because of their media dependence. “Productions that once took weeks, even months to make their way through teams of writers, editors, video editors, translators, graphic designers, or narrators can now be created with AI tools by one person in hours.”

**“Our research predicted exactly what we’re observing: terrorists deploying AI to accelerate existing activities rather than revolutionise their operational capabilities.”**

~ **Adam Hadley**, founder and executive director of Tech Against Terrorism

IS operatives are so enthralled with AI that they have used it to create a media program called News Harvest to disseminate propaganda videos. Broadcasts show AI-generated news anchors discussing IS operations, each created with cheap, user-friendly AI tools, Katz wrote.

The same tools now used by terrorists also can be used by their supporters, thus multiplying and magnifying the reach of extremist messaging with little to no cost or effort. Observers expect that as freely available apps combine with rapidly evolving AI technology, threats will only grow, causing security agencies to play catch-up, The Guardian newspaper reported in July 2025.

“Our research predicted exactly what we’re observing: terrorists deploying AI to accelerate existing activities rather than revolutionise their operational capabilities,” Adam Hadley, founder and executive director of Tech Against Terrorism, a group that works to disrupt terrorist activity online, told The Guardian.

Evidence shows that terrorists are fully aware of the power and capability at their fingertips. IS, for instance, put out a guide in 2023 on how to use generative AI securely, according to The Soufan Center. In February 2024, a media group associated with al-Qaida called The Islamic Media Cooperation Council announced an AI workshop, Katz wrote.

## REGULATION AND RESPONSE

To this point, AI tools have helped terrorist groups lend productive power and reach to their propaganda and communication campaigns. Some observers, however, think the technology soon could be employed in attacks as well.

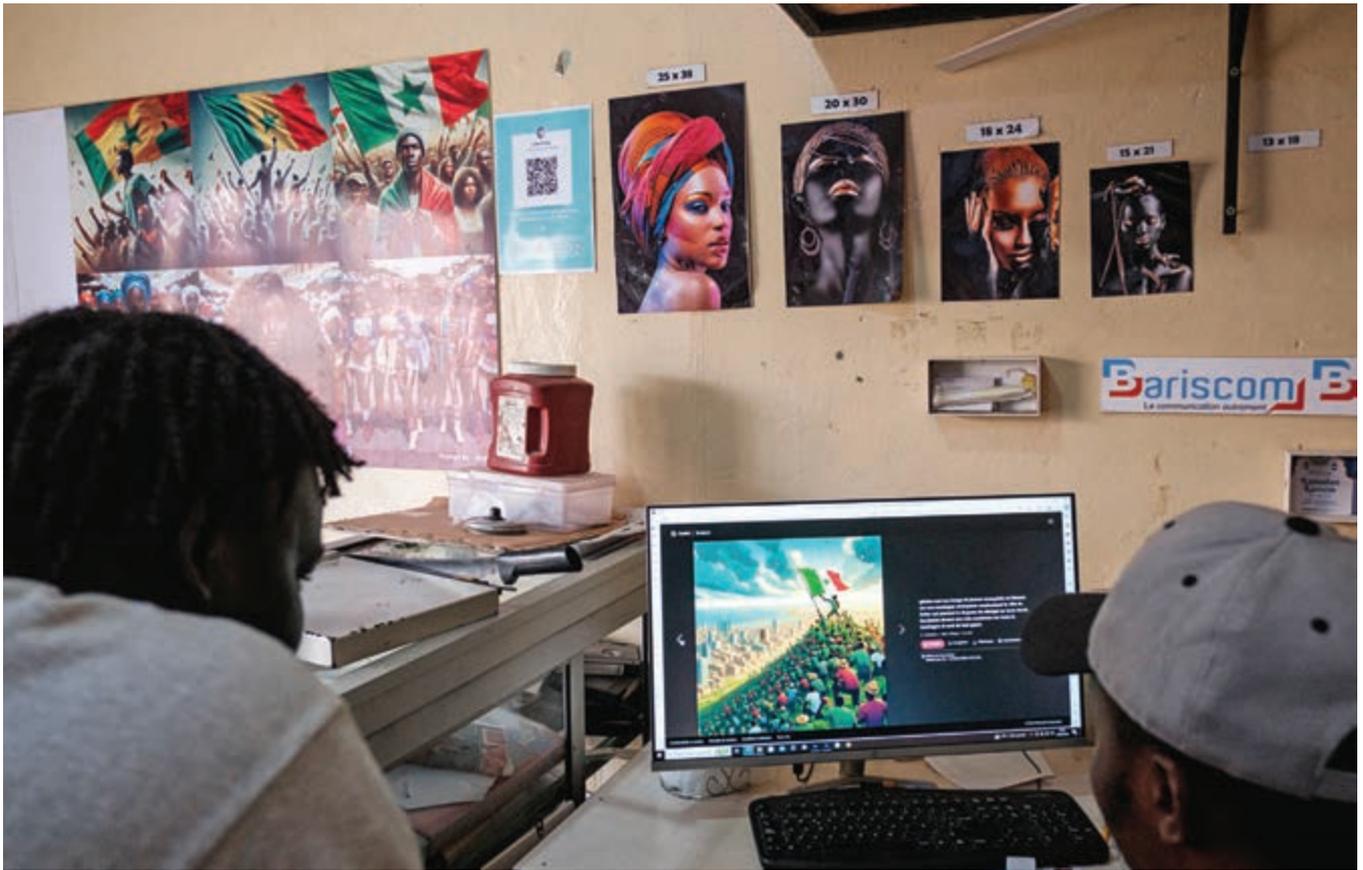
Middle East Media Research Institute Executive Director Steve Stalinsky, writing for the Forbes Nonprofit Council in June 2025, said some groups and individuals already are talking about using AI to organize uprisings against governments, make weapons of mass destruction and develop weapons systems such as “drones and self-driving car bombs.”



Social media platforms such as X can reach broad audiences with AI-generated content, giving terrorists fast and cheap methods for spreading dangerous propaganda and recruitment pitches. ADF ILLUSTRATION

The time has come, he wrote, for the AI industry to agree on best practices and standards to prevent use by terrorists. Most online platforms and tools publish terms of service that prohibit users from engaging in abusive, criminal or other harmful behavior, but enforcement always has been a challenge. Industry leaders have failed to curb the spread of terrorism and hate, Stalinsky wrote. So, governments will have to work with the industry on prevention.

The AU in 2024 adopted its Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy to guide governance of AI in Africa, but counterterrorism is not one of its stated priorities, according to a June 2025 article



**“You’ve got to invest. I think Africa needs to make some decisions. Will Africa lead, or will it be led? You have to invest; that’s the bottom line.”**

~ **Abdul-Hakeem Ajjola** of Nigeria, chair of the African Union Cyber Security Expert Group

by Brenda Mwale for GNET. Mwale, a lawyer and expert in counterterrorism law, wrote that as authorities continue to assess security risks that AI poses, “attention should also be paid to the emerging trends around terrorist exploitation of AI.”

How nations respond remains to be seen. Meanwhile, look for AI security threats to get worse before they get better, Ajjola said in the Africa Center webinar.

Akoh Baudouin, national liaison and security officer for the United Nations Development Programme in Cameroon, told the webinar that African security forces first need to understand how AI is being used in various security threats. Then they need to be proactive and adaptive in responding to them, including through counter-propaganda measures.

Ajjola agreed that being proactive is key. African nations will need to move from being

**Above: A Senegalese man explains how he uses an AI prompt website to create protest scenes that then can be used for posters and social media posts.** AFP/GETTY IMAGES

passive consumers of AI technology to active leaders of AI-driven security development and strategies. This could start with the AU and regional bodies, making sure that nations draft, pass and harmonize AI security laws. Then police and security forces must learn AI-driven defense and digital forensics and join forces in ways that allow for intelligence sharing, security agreements and cooperation.

All of this will be expensive, but the costs to African security go beyond money. “You’ve got to invest,” Ajjola said. “I think Africa needs to make some decisions. Will Africa lead, or will it be led? You have to invest; that’s the bottom line.” □



# GABONESE FORCES

## TRAIN FOR TACTICAL PROFICIENCY

ADF STAFF

**T**he Armed Forces of Gabon, including members of the Gendarmerie Tactical Unit, the 1st Gabonese Parachute Regiment and the Republican Guard Special Intervention Section, wrapped up several weeks of Joint Combined Exchange Training in Libreville in late June 2025. Gabonese Soldiers worked with personnel from the U.S. Army 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) to strengthen tactical proficiency, interoperability and enduring partnerships. In one exercise, Gabonese personnel advanced through smoke cover to simulate a building raid. In another, members

of the parachute regiment used a land model to plan movement. “This training has been about interoperability, leadership and trust,” said Deputy Chief of Mission David Mosby, United States Embassy in Gabon. “It has included small-unit tactics, medical care and the development of noncommissioned officers — those indispensable leaders who are the backbone of modern militaries.” Throughout the exchange, both forces trained in tactical exercises designed to expand their operational capabilities. The event also provided opportunities to learn from one another’s leadership and mission execution approaches.



STAFF SGT. AMBER LITTERAL/U.S. AIR FORCE



**LOADED**  
**WITH**  
**DANGER**

# Arms Depots Can Pose Catastrophic Threats to Civilians Unless Authorities Maintain Safety and Security Measures

ADF STAFF

Just before the sun began its evening retreat in the skies over Lagos, Nigeria, on January 27, 2002, a fire broke out in a city market near Isolo and Onigbongo districts, north of the urban center.

The blaze soon grew and spread to the adjacent Ikeja Military Cantonment, the city's largest such facility. Heat and flames ignited ammunition in the encampment's weapons storage depot. As bullets popped, some feared yet another military coup was unfolding.

Then the explosions started. Bombs and artillery rounds detonated, sending shells and mortars into thousands of homes, raining fire, shrapnel, destruction, and death on thousands of terrified and unwitting civilians.

Thunderous blasts shook the ground up to 32 kilometers away. Windows shattered up to 16 kilometers from Ikeja. But panic was the most destructive force unleashed that day. As tens of thousands tried to flee, hundreds became trapped at the edge of the Oke Afa and Pako canals. Many leaped into the water. Swelling crowds pushed in hundreds more.

After midnight, the explosions stopped. As dawn broke, fishermen and rescuers trawled the canals for bodies, hauling them in with poles and dragging them ashore. Kazeem Kasali, leader of a fishermen's rescue team, told *The Guardian* newspaper that he personally recovered 84 bodies. His team pulled out more than 300.

"I am looking for my children. I have been here since the morning," Shola Odun, a printer, told *Agence France Presse* (AFP) the day after the disaster. "They have been pulling the bodies out of here since first thing. They are taking them away. I am looking for my children, my relatives, there are more than 580 bodies. One man here lost six of his children. He found them. He is dying."

## Prevalent and Preventable

As the sun crept back and the final flames had breathed their last, more than 1,000 people — many of them children — had perished in what remains the deadliest



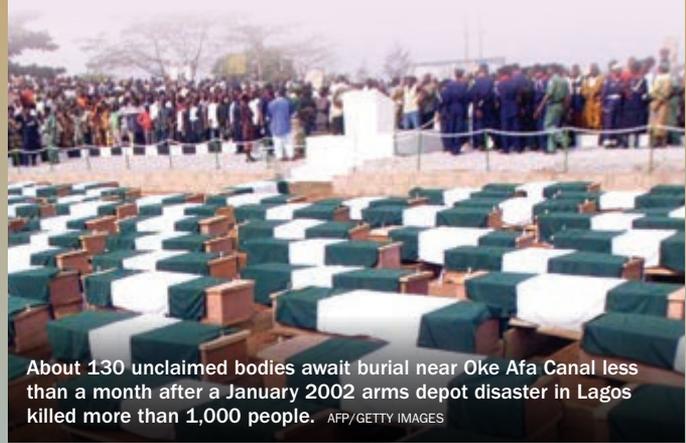
A resident of Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, stands in anguish amid ruins a day after a 2012 arms depot explosion leveled the city's Mpila district. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

weapons depot disaster on record. Thousands more were injured, and more than 12,000 were displaced, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

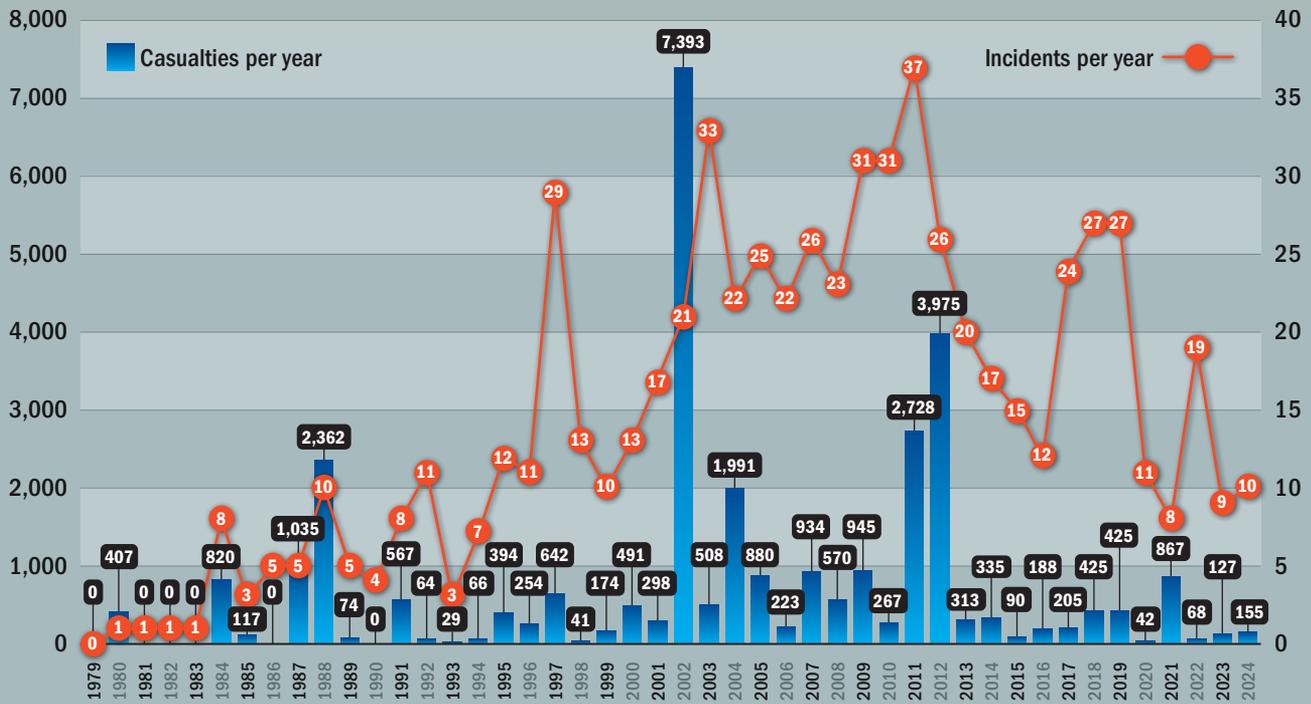
Lagos residents immediately decried what they perceived as negligence by the military. Then-Brig. Gen. George Emdin, commanding officer of the Ikeja garrison at the time, issued a televised apology the night of the disaster.

# Munitions Site Explosions Worldwide

- From 1979 through 2024, munitions site explosions injured or killed more than **31,000** people.
- The highest number of casualties was in 2002, fueled by a devastating blast in Lagos, Nigeria, the deadliest such explosion on record. The second-highest year for casualties was in 2012 when a blast occurred at a Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, arms depot.
- There were **674** incidents from 1979 through 2024.



About 130 unclaimed bodies await burial near Oke Afa Canal less than a month after a January 2002 arms depot disaster in Lagos killed more than 1,000 people. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Disclaimer: Some incidents reported in conflict-affected countries in recent years have not been included due to insufficient information to confirm them as unplanned explosions at munitions sites by the Small Arms Survey's definition.

Source: Small Arms Survey



Health workers transport the body of a person killed in the Brazzaville munitions depot disaster. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

“On behalf of the military, we are sorry,” he said, according to a BBC report. “This is an old ammunition depot with high-calibre bombs ... some efforts were being made in the recent past to try to improve the storage facility. But this accident happened before the high authorities could do what was needed.”

The Lagos incident was not the first or last of its kind in Africa or the world. According to the Small Arms Survey, “unplanned explosions at munition sites” have killed or injured 31,489 people worldwide from January 1979 through December 2024. Of the 674 explosions in that period, six of the top 10 with the most casualties were in Africa, including the top two incidents, the Survey reports. The Lagos incident made 2002 the most dangerous year in the time span. The second-highest number of casualties came 10 years later when explosions rocked a depot in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo.

## Incidents With the Largest Number of Casualties



1.	January 1, 2002	Lagos, Nigeria	6,500
2.	March 4, 2012	Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo	3,777
3.	July 7, 2011	Abadan, Turkmenistan	1,482
4.	April 22, 2004	Ryongchon, North Korea	1,460
5.	April 10, 1988	Rawalpindi, Pakistan	1,193
6.	June 4, 1988	Arzamas, Russia	1,091
7.	December 21, 1987	Alexandria, Egypt	1,006
8.	April 29, 2009	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	726
9.	March 7, 2021	Bata, Equatorial Guinea	705
10.	March 22, 2007	Malhazine, Mozambique	622

Source: Small Arms Survey

That March 4, 2012, blast killed about 300 people in the Mpila residential area, injured more than 2,300 others and left 17,000 homeless, according to AFP. Authorities charged 32 soldiers in the incident, convicting six and acquitting 26. A corporal was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor for willfully setting fire to the depot.

The most recent such incident in Africa happened June 18, 2024, when an arms depot outside N'Djamena, Chad, exploded, killing nine and injuring 46 others.

Handling errors and inappropriate work practices caused a fifth of these incidents, according to the Small Arms Survey. Other significant causes included failure to account for external and environmental influences, improper storage, armaments deterioration, and poor security.

Experts say well-established safety and security procedures at arms depots are vital. Military authorities must be mindful of their proximity to cities and population

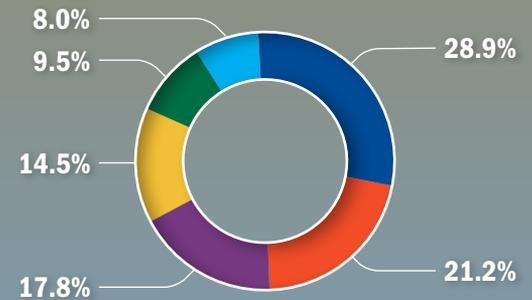
centers. Likewise, the depots must be adequately built, fortified, and secured inside and out to prevent theft, trespassing and fire.

### SECURING WEAPONS DEPOTS

Stockpile control is an important part of weapons and ammunition management. It can reduce the amount of illicit weaponry getting into the hands of terrorists and prevent unplanned explosions. However, it also is the one category that produced the most persistent challenges among 12 African nations surveyed for a 2024 United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) report.

The UNIDIR report lists Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia as having made progress in stockpile management. Benin in 2022 was strengthening physical infrastructure for weapons and ammunition storage. Côte d'Ivoire in 2023 held a workshop to validate training on

## Main Causes of Explosions



- Cause undetermined or unrecorded
- Handling errors and inappropriate working practices
- Failure to account for external and environmental influences and events
- Inappropriate storage infrastructure and systems
- Poor security
- Lack of surveillance leading to ammunition deterioration

Source: Small Arms Survey

**Well-established safety and security procedures at arms depots are vital. Military authorities must be mindful of their proximity to cities and population centers.**

ADF ILLUSTRATION

# Depot Security

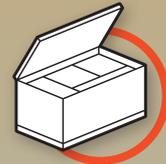
Poorly maintained and inadequately secured weapons and ammunition depots can lead to catastrophic explosions and allow bad actors to acquire materiel through theft and corruption. Low-cost security and monitoring improvements can significantly enhance safety. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe offers a list of effective measures.



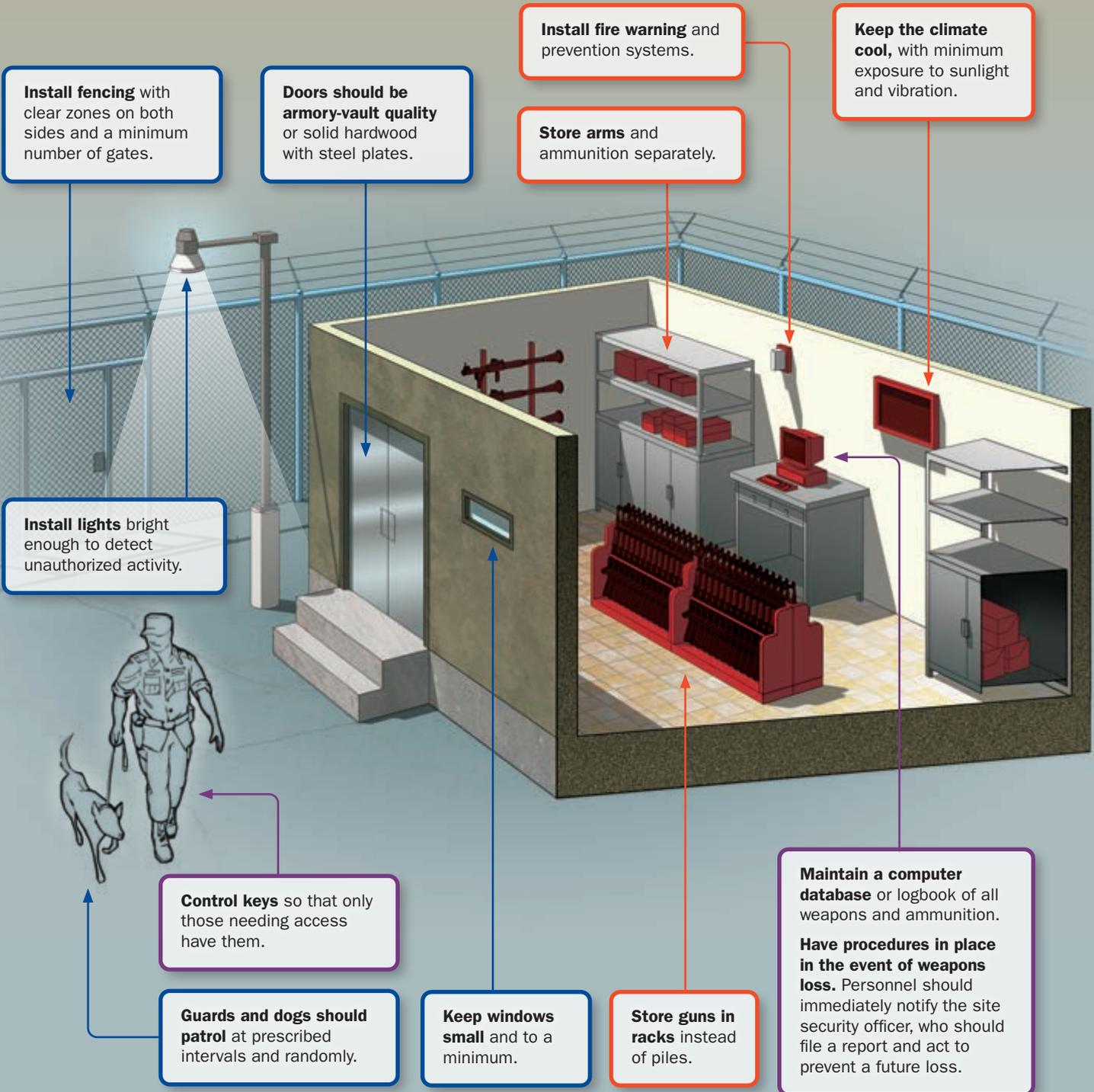
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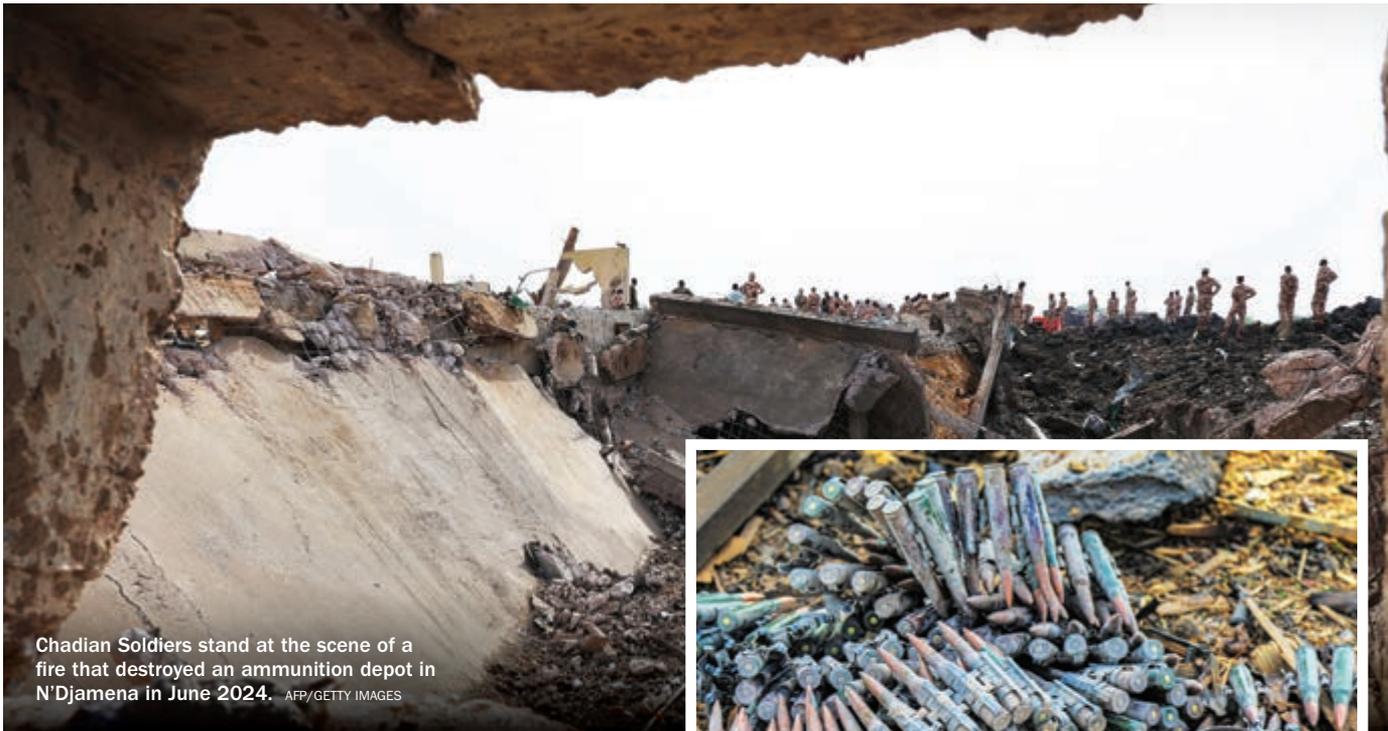
Access control/  
oversight



Storage



ADF ILLUSTRATION



Chadian Soldiers stand at the scene of a fire that destroyed an ammunition depot in N'Djamena in June 2024. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

the subject for its military training schools.

Somalia in 2023 audited infrastructure, assessed needs, and looked at security and accountability measures. It finished building an ammunition storage site in Jazeera in February 2023. By April 2024, UNIDIR reported, Somalia had audited and assessed 228 storage facilities. It also categorized and planned storage based on weapons' desirability to terrorists, a particularly important process as security forces battle al-Shabaab.

A list of relatively simple measures can help militaries secure weapons storage depots against environmental and human threats. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) sets forth a list of things that will make weapons and ammunition storage depots accessible to Soldiers and safe to nearby civilians.

Buildings should be appropriately fortified and secured to allow only authorized access. Armory vault doors or solid hardwood doors covered with steel plates should include jambs and frames and be securely anchored. Padlocks and hasps are essential. Windows and other openings should be minimal and always be closed and locked. All openings should include intruder detection devices.

External lighting should be sufficient to deter and help detect unauthorized access in and around the site. Guards should patrol the property at regular intervals and make random checks. Guards can use trained dogs to help with their patrols. Checks should be conducted during on- and off-duty hours.

Fences are essential. They should be placed around the entire perimeter and have clear zones on each side. Gates should be kept to a minimum. Keys should be issued only to those requiring access for official work, and all keys should be registered and inventoried periodically.



Charred bullets remain after a fire set off ammunition stored at a military depot in N'Djamena, Chad, in June 2024. REUTERS

Limiting access can reduce losses due to theft or corruption, such as soldiers selling arms to bad actors.

Officials also must carefully manage weapons and ammunition storage to prevent unplanned explosions. OSCE guidelines recommend storing weapons and ammunition in separate buildings. If that's not possible, they should be placed in separate rooms or containers or separated by barriers such as sandbags. Stored ammunition can range from rifle and pistol rounds to grenades, mortar shells, detonators, and other high-capacity shells. Each should be stored together according to type. Detonators should be separated from all types of ammunition.

Artillery and ammunition can be sensitive to heat and temperature changes. Storage depots should be permanent, fire-resistant structures with adequate ventilation that keeps temperatures below 40 degrees Celsius. When munitions are obsolete or unwanted, the U.N. recommends disposal through destruction.

"Effective stockpile management ensures the operational readiness of national security forces, prevents the theft or the diversion of state-owned weapons and ammunition, and enables the timely identification and disposal of obsolete and surplus materiel," according to the UNIDIR report. □



# LESSONS LEARNED THE **HARD WAY**

**A Former Djiboutian Peacekeeper  
Shares Lessons From a Deployment  
With the African Union Mission in Somalia**

ABDISALAM OSMAN MUSA



**Inset:** Djiboutian Soldiers serving in the African Union Mission in Somalia disembark from a United Nations aircraft at the Beledweyne airport. AMISOM

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) lasted 16 years and was one of the most ambitious peacekeeping efforts in the AU's history. With six troop-contributing countries and a force of about 20,000, its mission was to defeat the terror group al-Shabaab and hand over full security responsibilities to the Somali National Army.

Today, the mission continues under the banner of the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), which intends to exit the country by the end of 2029.

Although al-Shabaab is weakened and does not hold the expansive terrain it once did, it remains a stubborn insurgency capable of ambushing security forces and launching attacks against civilian targets. With an estimated 7,000 to 12,000 fighters, it continues to finance its operations through illicit trafficking and by forcing people to pay taxes in areas it controls. Al-Shabaab's links

with Houthi rebels in Yemen give fighters access to advanced bomb-making material and weaponry such as drones.

I served as a liaison and movement control officer with the Djiboutian contingent from 2014 to 2015. I had a firsthand view of the challenges facing AMISOM in subduing al-Shabaab.

During my deployment, my logistic and combat support movement control unit was tasked with supporting the Djiboutian battalion securing the city of Beledweyne and its population of 55,000 in central Somalia, in what was then called Sector 4. It continues to be a hotly contested area and the site of numerous al-Shabaab attacks. After six months, our unit moved to Jalalaqsi in south-central Hiran province to provide relief in place for Burundian troops and also to prevent al-Shabaab from controlling the rural areas in this sector.

Lessons learned during my deployment can provide actionable solutions to help

Peacekeepers patrol the outskirts of Beledweyne in central Somalia.

AMISOM



Djiboutian troops serving with AMISOM sit on the back of an armored personnel vehicle on the outskirts of Beledweyne. The city was liberated from al-Shabaab control in 2011. AMISOM



commanders, officers and Soldiers to model successes and avoid mistakes in future peacekeeping rotations.

### Build in Rest and Recovery Time

Experts say rested Soldiers perform better in training and combat. An often overlooked, yet vital, operational consideration is the rest and recovery of a unit conducting predeployment training. All AMISOM/AUSSOM troop-contributing countries must meet fitness, mental health, weapons and equipment skill standards as outlined in the U.N. predeployment training program.

The amount of new information, stringent training standards, tight timelines, time away from families and long training days makes this a stressful time. Some commanders and training officers, while well-intentioned, seek to implement their own requirements over and above the U.N. standards, thereby further exhausting already fatigued Soldiers. While seeking to “exceed the standard” is laudable and some would argue in the DNA of commanding officers, neglecting to build in ample rest and recovery time risks burning out Soldiers before they even begin their peacekeeping deployment to Somalia.

This was the situation with my deployment. After a rigorous and nonstop pace of training, we suddenly received a warning order to depart Djibouti and deploy to Somalia. Peacekeeping missions in high threat environments demand stamina, endurance and sharp mental focus. When we were ordered to move, the unit was tired, and it put our battalion at risk. If we hadn’t received timely support from friendly forces already in the country, the entire operation could have ended in disaster.

The unit struggled with Soldier burnout throughout our 24-month deployment. Repeated exposure to stressful and traumatic events gradually wore us down. Soldier morale dramatically declined, and eventually, some troops began to mentally check out, losing focus, and further endangering the mission and their fellow Soldiers.

People walk through Beledweyne. The city was the headquarters of AMISOM Sector 4 and faced repeated attacks by al-Shabaab. AMISOM





A United Nations peacekeeper oversees a disarmament and demobilization operation in Maloum, Central African Republic, in July 2025. LEONEL GROTHE/MINUSCA

# A SHIFT IN PEACEKEEPING

## As United Nations Missions Decline, Regional Efforts Hope to Learn From Past Mistakes

ADF STAFF

Africa's international peacekeeping landscape has evolved in the past decade. Since 2015, there has been a steady shift away from large multinational United Nations missions and growth in the number of interventions led by the African Union, regional economic blocs and other alliances.

A decade ago, there were nine large U.N. peacekeeping missions in Africa. By July 2025, there were only five, with the largest, the U.N. Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, set to end in December 2025.

U.N. missions cannot operate without consent from host nations and parties to conflicts. But they often see that permission erode due to perceived ineffectiveness in preventing violence against civilians, the spread of false information and other security concerns, according to "Host-Country Consent in UN Peacekeeping," a 2023 Stimson Center paper by Julie Gregory and Lisa Sharland.

U.N. missions deploy under three core peacekeeping principles: consent of the parties, impartiality, and the commitment to use force only in self-defense and to defend the mission mandate.

The U.N. mission in Mali, known as MINUSMA, ended after 10 years in December 2023 at the request of the host country's

ruling junta. Ultimately, the mission failed to reverse attacks and gains by an array of terrorist groups. It suffered from a shifting and expanding mandate during its lifespan and had a range of international troop contributors, many of whom had language barriers and no knowledge of local dynamics.

African-led peace support operations, as they are known, can avoid neocolonial criticism and often deploy faster with more flexible mandates that allow troops to better address cross-border threats. However, like

U.N. missions, funding, resources and relations with locals still pose challenges. Such has been the case with Southern African Development Community missions in the DRC and Mozambique.

Nate Allen, associate professor at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, wrote in August 2023 that the AU and regional economic communities (RECs) should adopt standards for responding to cross-border security challenges. This could include the AU providing guidance and coordination to African Standby Forces through intelligence-sharing centers, and "mechanisms to command, conduct, and operationalize joint operations targeting specific groups."

The AU and RECs also should better train African troops serving in peace operations on human rights, the laws of armed conflict, and avoiding and preventing civilian harm, he wrote. They also should ensure "that the military components of African-led peace operations are integrated into efforts by civilian agencies, local leaders, humanitarian actors, and the international community to address the underlying causes of conflict through development assistance, humanitarian relief, and locally led peace initiatives."

African-led operations will need more money and resources to be truly effective. Short-term efforts could include U.N. peacekeeping funds to support African operations until such time that the AU meets its own funding targets, Allen wrote.



Maj. Gen. Odowaa Yusuf Rageh, right, Somalia's chief of defense forces, greets a Ugandan Soldier serving in the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia in October 2025. AUSSOM

A Djiboutian Soldier serving in AMISOM salutes during a parade to mark his country's Independence Day.

AMISOM



Djiboutian Soldiers serving in AMISOM unload medical equipment donated to the Beledweyne general hospital. AMISOM

Commanders and training officers need to fully consider the cost of Soldier burnout during predeployment training and work to ensure that adequate rest and recovery periods are built into the training calendar. After all, peacekeeping is a marathon and not a sprint. Backward planning a full rest cycle from the deployment date, and interspersing regular rest cycles between training, ensures that all Soldiers are in “mission-ready” mode for when they step on the ground in their host peacekeeping country.

### Prioritize Logistics and Leadership

After six months of adapting to the terrain in Beledweyne, we received the operation plan to move the battalion 182 kilometers south to our designated area of responsibility. I was the movement control officer tasked with the relocation.

Moving personnel, food, ammunition, construction materials and heavy equipment was a complex task, especially for a junior officer. During the preparation phase, I consulted experienced officers and studied United States and United Nations logistics doctrines. Despite all the planning, things did not go as expected.

While transporting tanks on flatbed trucks, an inexperienced driver moving at high speed caused a T-72 tank to slip off and become stuck. I immediately contacted the head of logistics, and after extensive discussion, we decided to use a bulldozer to reposition the tank properly on the transport vehicle. The situation was highly tense with the entire convoy stationary and exposed, and there was fear we could fall victim to an attack.

The incident taught me to always be sure that proper guidance and safety protocols are followed when transporting heavy equipment, and to make sure that inexperienced personnel have oversight when performing critical tasks. I also learned that speed of movement does not necessarily result in efficiency. A movement plan must include agreements on safe and consistent speeds.

### High-Risk Movements Require Constant Communication

During the relocation operation, our strategy was to move at a speed below 20 kph, protected by two layers of Soldiers surrounding the vehicles. This reduced the risk of ambushes, but the absence of aerial fire support posed a critical vulnerability, particularly in forested areas where al-Shabaab was known to hide. This vulnerability to attack persisted throughout the week during our relocation, as our convoy came under fire and was ambushed multiple times.

Amid the chaos of the ambushes, one Soldier became separated from his unit. It later was reported that he was seen in the village of Nuur Fanax, where civilians misled him when he asked for assistance. Subsequently, al-Shabaab fighters surrounded and killed him. They tried to use his body as a bargaining tool. Despite indirect communications with al-Shabaab, no agreement was reached to allow the return of the body.

In asymmetric operations, particularly in environments and missions with limited technological and logistical support, effective small-unit leadership, personal contact and constant communication are vital. Individual radios and tracking systems are essential for team leaders to maintain real-time accountability of their personnel during combat. This tragedy highlights the importance of equipping every Soldier with reliable communication tools and ensuring robust contact between fire team leaders and their members. It also underscores the need for well-practiced contingency plans for casualty recovery and balancing the moral obligation to bring home our fallen Soldiers with the need to avoid further losses.

### Deception Can Draw Soldiers Into an Ambush

Before noon one day during the convoy movement, the Djiboutian battalion seized control of Garasyaani, a village

60 kilometers south of Beledweyne. After neutralizing all remaining resistance within the town, Soldiers began establishing key checkpoints at the main entry and exit routes.

We deployed armored personnel carriers to block roads and control movement. About one hour after the clearing operation, an elderly man approached a group of officers, including me. He appeared exhausted and distressed. He claimed that one of our Soldiers had assaulted his daughter. In response, our leadership team, along with a police officer and a female Soldier assigned to handle such sensitive cases, traveled to a house in a corner of the town to investigate the allegation.

Upon arrival, we began our preliminary investigation and quickly found inconsistencies suggesting that the claim was false. Suddenly, we were ambushed by gunfire from al-Shabaab fighters. By returning fire and relying on our training, we managed to withdraw from the trap, push the enemy back, reposition our team and conduct a counterattack. To this day, I remain doubtful of the authenticity of the initial report. Nevertheless, we resolved the situation by offering compensation to the family.

The incident revealed important lessons. The experience taught me to never accept unverified claims, even those involving moral or emotional appeals. It is important to always investigate the claims thoroughly while maintaining vigilance and caution. It also was a reminder that insurgents do not follow conventional rules of engagement, and peacekeepers must expect the unexpected.

### Supply Routes Are a Lifeline

By the time we arrived in Somalia, al-Shabaab had been pushed out of most major urban centers. This led the group to shift its tactics to disrupting logistics by attacking supply routes that were essential for bringing provisions to peacekeepers and keeping the country's economy moving. The U.N. responded by initiating an airlift operations campaign to deliver food and fuel to more than 20,000 peacekeepers.

An unintended consequence of this U.N. initiative was a dramatically increased operational cost and reduced availability of air assets for other critical missions such as medical evacuations, reconnaissance or tactical operations. The ceding of our ground logistics capability to al-Shabaab also resulted in the civilian population paying a tax directly to the terror group, so that goods and services could continue to move along the roadways. This situation ultimately undermined the authority of the AMISOM mission and local Somali governance.

Despite having sufficient troops on the ground from the peacekeepers and the Somali National Army (SNA), securing main routes remained a challenge. To prevent ceding the ground to the terrorists, and to help spread security into pockets of enemy-held territory, building smaller forward operating bases (FOBs), particularly along the main service roads, is recommended. Small

patrols could be conducted, and more contact with local populations established, to help the SNA secure the country. These smaller FOBs, say of company-sized forces, also could help respond to "troops in contact" actions from convoys traveling on the main supply route. Increasing the pressure on al-Shabaab by restricting its freedom of movement and ability to disrupt the economy are actions that will help separate the terror group from the civilian population and ultimately lead to its defeat.

### Learn from Challenges, Improve Future Outcomes

Experience on the ground taught me hard, but essential, lessons. Many problems could be avoided by managing troop morale and energy levels during predeployment.

Providing adequate time for Soldiers to rest and recover before deployment is crucial. At least 50% of preparation time should be dedicated to developing a concrete and executable deployment plan.

Predeployment training needs to emphasize small unit leadership that includes accounting for and taking care of Soldiers. Rehearsing battle drills for vehicle recovery, responding to ambushes and scenario-based civilian interactions should be a priority for peacekeeping forces deploying to dangerous missions. Moreover, commanders and staff officers must work to build a stabilization strategy with the local population to ensure their safety, security and prosperity.

Although some leaders prefer central planning and command, I believe it is vital that battalion leaders on the ground have full authority to plan and execute the mission for their sector, as long as their actions align with the mission's overall objectives. During high-tempo operations, leaders at all levels, from fire team leader to the battalion commander, must maintain accountability through regular head counts and team oversight. Simultaneously, every peacekeeper must uphold discipline and comply with standard operating procedures expected of professional Soldiers.

Success in combat is not only about fighting and liberating towns and territories. Commanders also must possess a clear and structured vision for the stabilization phase, including counterinsurgency operations, communication and support to the civilian population. This includes plans to keep major roads open and secure so peaceful economic activity can flourish.

Following these principles and implementing these lessons learned into predeployment training can save lives and improve overall mission outcomes. □



**About the author:** Abdissalam Osman Musa is a Djiiboutian mechanical engineer and a former logistics officer who served in the U.N. Support Office in Somalia. As a lieutenant, he was a liaison and movement control officer for the Djiiboutian contingent of the African Union Mission in Somalia from 2014 to 2015. Today, he works as an engineer and manages projects throughout the Horn of Africa.

*SECURITY TESTED AS*

# CITIES GROW



# AFRICA'S URBAN AREAS STRUGGLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE WORLD'S LARGEST POPULATION BOOM

ADF STAFF

**AS** Africa's population continues to grow, cities could see unprecedented levels of insecurity, from within and from outside, according to a 2025 study by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

Africa is the world's fastest-growing region. Researchers say that by 2050 the continent will add 1 billion people, growing to a population of 2.5 billion. "Eighty percent of this population growth will occur in cities," according to the Africa Center report "Africa's Unprecedented Urbanization is Shifting the Security Landscape." Nearly half of Africans — more than 700 million people — already live in urban areas.

The continent is projected to add 900 million new urban residents over the next 25 years, which is more than the combined urban population of Europe and the United States, researcher Kurtis Lockhart wrote for *Asterisk* magazine in July 2025. "The scale and speed of this growth are historically unprecedented. It is a wave crashing upon a continent that currently lacks the capacity to absorb it.

"Two-thirds of the urban space that Africa is estimated to have by 2050 has yet to be built," he added. "Entire neighborhoods, whole cities, and even major metropolitan areas and mega-regions that don't currently exist will need to soon."

Experts say the challenge will be in building infrastructure to keep up with growth and providing security services such as police to combat crime. If these efforts are not successful, it opens the doors for terrorists to capitalize. Some of Africa's largest and most dynamic urban centers now have severe security problems, ranging from petty theft and armed robbery to organized crime.

## UNCHECKED GROWTH, FRAGILE CITIES

The African Union has studied urban crime for years. It says that although urbanization has led to an increase in poverty and inequality, the patterns vary significantly.

However, the AU said, there are common denominators. People living in dense urban areas tend to earn money outside of the formal economy. The informal sector — under-the-table income not subject to taxes or extending benefits — amounts to 85% of employment in some areas.

The AU also said that weak institutions result in poor urban policing and planning, "which has led to dysfunctional housing and land markets, which in turn has led to the growth of informal settlements."

The World Economic Forum says African cities are not ready for the coming population explosion.

"While cities in Africa represent engines of economic growth, few are attuned to the rapidly changing demographics: the majority of people in cities are under age 35 and cities are not prepared for the rapid influx of migrating young people," the forum reports.

## OUTSIDE PROBLEMS

Outside factors in congested urban areas also can influence security. In Sudan, the ongoing civil war adds a new dimension to the congestion and poverty of its urban areas.

"Sudan may be a precursor of this emerging pattern," the Africa Center reported. "Sudan is the epicenter of organized armed violence impacting urban centers in Africa, accounting for 38 percent of all such fatalities across the continent."

Militant insurgencies in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger resulted in 1,165 urban area fatalities in 2024, studies show. As terrorists step up their attacks in the three countries, more urban residents are likely to be killed or injured as terrorists advance southward and westward into more populated areas.

Somalia also suffers from outside influences. "The 644 urban-based fatalities linked to organized violence in Somalia comprises 12 percent of the total fatalities in this conflict-wracked country," the Africa Center wrote. "These incidents — mostly in Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Kismayo — reflect al-Shabaab's reliance on forms of remote violence in urban areas including drones, [improvised explosive devices] IEDs, and bombings, even as the group engages in battles with the military and state militias in rural strongholds."

The Yopougon district of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire is one of Africa's many fast-growing urban areas. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## TAKING STEPS

In 2013, the AU established a set of 50-year goals to improve citizens' lives across the continent. The goals, called Agenda 2063, include the establishment of "sustainable, resilient, and inclusive cities."

"This vision can only be achieved if regional and national policies of all AU member states are aligned to this goal," researcher Ekeminiabasi Eyita-Okon said in a 2022 report. "While noting the importance of member state buy-in, other challenges emerge, namely coordination problems, structural violence, competing external development agenda for Africa, and the challenges of policy implementation."

She noted that the goals give the continent the opportunity to rethink its approach to development, encourage development cooperation and compliance, and categorize urban security issues as a political priority.

In their study for the Brenthurst Foundation, "Strategic Dilemmas: Rewiring Africa for a Teeming, Urban Future," researchers Greg Mills, Jeffrey Herbst and Dickie Davis said urban security problems "cannot just be left to the security forces to solve." They said a comprehensive approach requires whole-of-government attention.

"It needs to be underpinned by a common narrative which succinctly explains why the current situation has been arrived at, what needs to be done to sort the situation out, and how these actions are going to be achieved," they wrote, adding that "large dollops of hands-on local leadership concerned with the detail of implementation" will be required.

The rapid urbanization of many African countries will require a reassessment of strategies to provide citizen security, the Africa Center says. Police forces, which make up nearly half of the uniformed security across the continent, will need improved training. Authorities will need to rethink force size, deployments and core responsibilities within population centers.

Although military forces and peacekeepers from the United Nations and other organizations can help with security in urban areas, they are only temporary solutions. Protecting citizens and preserving the peace in civilian communities is ultimately the responsibility of the local and regional police. Police forces have local ties, often permanent ones. They are investigators, peace officers and evidence gatherers.

At their most effective, police forces make themselves an integral part of the neighborhoods they serve, a practice known as community-based policing. It's a philosophy and strategy in which police and community members work together to prevent crime and solve problems by addressing the causes, thus creating safer neighborhoods. It's a critical tool in addressing inner-city problems throughout the world.

Community police forces do not attain authority and legitimacy automatically, wrote researchers for the London School of Economics and Political Science in a 2025 report on community policing in Ethiopia. They said that community policing is a way to build trust and make policing more

effective and more aligned with community needs.

"Increased community involvement helps reduce the politicisation of policing," the researchers reported. "It does so by addressing the failures of conventional police models whilst also stressing the value of partnering with communities in reducing crime and increasing public safety." They concluded that being a genuine part of the community is critical in "communicating intelligence, reducing tensions, and enhancing police accountability."

Kenya has a community policing model called "Nyumba Kumi," which is Swahili for 10 households. In this system, households work together to keep watch and report suspicious matters to police. One of the group's leaders leveraged the system to build trust and improve security by setting up a direct line so the public could reach his office, according to Saferworld, a global peace and security organization based in London. He also established direct lines to police quick response units. In the



Young people play video games in the Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, suburb of Yopougon. The suburb is the most heavily populated of the city's 10 urban communities. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

event of an attack, authorities would hold a public forum known as a barasa to identify underlying issues before responding with force.

The system replaced "a forceful approach with one that is based on trust and accountability that builds relationships with local communities to gain intelligence," Saferworld reported.

In a 2014 resolution, the U.N. Security Council noted that community-oriented policing institutions with well-trained officers are important in "countering violent extremism, including through building trust and dialogue between state authorities and communities."

Although community policing often is described as a soft approach to security, it has been used successfully worldwide to reduce fear of security threats,

# AFRICAN UNION SETS 50-YEAR GOALS

ADF STAFF

The African Union has long known the challenges urban areas will face. In 2013, the AU introduced Agenda 2063, a 50-year plan for the continent's growth and progress. The expansive plan, the AU said, was to address "ongoing structural transformations," including economic growth and social progress.

## Agenda 2063 lists seven goals:

- **A high standard of living**, quality of life and well-being for all. The plan supports job creation, an end to inequalities of income and opportunity, with particular support for young people. The AU says the continent must face rapid population growth and urbanization and improve housing and access to basic necessities such as water, sanitation and electricity while providing social security and protection.
- **Well-educated citizens** and "skills revolutions" underpinned by science, technology and innovation.
- **Healthy citizens**, accomplished by expanding access to health care, particularly for women and girls.
- **Transformed economies and jobs.** The AU said the continent must properly use its natural resources and improve manufacturing and industrialization while "raising productivity and competitiveness."
- **Modern agriculture** for increased proactivity and production. The AU said the continent must be able to feed itself and evolve into a net food exporter.
- **A blue/ocean economy** for accelerated economic growth, unlocking the vast potential of Africa's maritime assets.
- **Environmentally sustainable policies** and resilient economies. Communities must put in place measures to sustainably manage the continent's "rich biodiversity, forests, land and waters."

## PROTECTING CITIZENS AND PRESERVING THE PEACE IN CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES IS ULTIMATELY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL POLICE.

prevent crime and improve public safety, according to the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Such policing typically can be broken into five elements: problem-solving, partnership, service delivery, empowerment and accountability. The center said community policing can be particularly useful in identifying suspicious behaviors, including radicalization and extremism, and informing police officers promptly.

The Africa Center study shows that some plans to improve urban security already are in place or are being organized. Some cities are investing in data gathering, measuring how to better govern and make decisions. The Southern African Development Community is working on Good Governance Africa, a project to develop indicators for African cities, with the intention of better informing decision-makers on priority areas for improvements.

Various levels of government in African nations are developing job training programs that serve as models for urban policymakers. In Nigeria, the EdoJobs initiative, launched by the Edo State government, offers skills training and job placement services to combat youth unemployment. In Kenya, the Kenya Youth Employment Opportunities Project, supported by the national government, provides training and business grants to young people. The Kenya project has reached more than 358,000 people, and 77% have found jobs.

In the Abobo commune of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, local vigilance committees have partnered with police to address rising urban crime. These committees act as intermediaries between residents and law enforcement, building communication and trust. This approach has contributed to improved community-police relations and more effective crime prevention strategies.

A key to managing the security challenges of Africa's urban demographic shift will be to avoid treating entire neighborhoods or populations as security threats, the Africa Center concluded. Historically, such approaches, such as cordoning off areas of the city, forced evictions and police crackdowns, have only deepened mistrust and made heavy-handedness by police one of the most damaging forms of insecurity in fast-growing cities.

"Instead, local authorities must work to understand these communities, recognize their role in urban resilience and vitality, and integrate them more fully into the city's economic and social systems." □

# TRAGEDY

IN THE

# CROSSHAIRS

**Drone Technology Offers  
Counterterror Possibilities but  
Requires Safeguards and Oversight**

An armed man walks past the war-ravaged Republican Palace in Khartoum, Sudan, after it was retaken by the Sudanese Armed Forces. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



ADF STAFF

**R**ecent advances in drone technology are changing the conduct of warfare, but these revolutionary developments are also outpacing the ethics rules that govern their use.

Across the globe, the use of armed drones without proper oversight results in the deaths of innocent people. In the war between Russia and Ukraine, short-range drone attacks in Ukraine have killed 395 civilians and injured more than 2,600, according to a June 2025 United Nations report. Ukraine is now “the world’s most advanced drone theater,” accounting for 70% of the battlefield injuries and deaths, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies reported in 2025.

Sudan has become another hot spot for indiscriminate drone use. Both sides in the civil war there have demonstrated monstrous indifference to civilians in their drone attacks.

“Innocent civilians in Sudan continue to have their homes, lives and communities devastated by indiscriminately used weapons as they land in increasingly unrestrained hands,” according to an Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project study.

“Death on Delivery,” a 2025 report on drone warfare sponsored by research organization Drone Wars UK, says that recent studies of attacks show an urgent need for increased controls on armed drone proliferation. It also notes the “clear failures of responsibility of those exporting these weapons in providing them to governments with seemingly little intention of upholding

international humanitarian law.”

“The extent of civilian suffering demonstrated in this report should make clear the threat posed by the rapid expansion of drone warfare worldwide,” the report said. “Innocent civilians living with conflict, political instability and widespread insecurity now confront the added threat of drone attacks, rendering even the most basic facets of day-to-day life — visiting a market, or attending a place of worship — potentially deadly.”

In Africa alone, the report says, more than 943 civilians were killed in at least 50 incidents across six countries from November 2021 to November 2024.

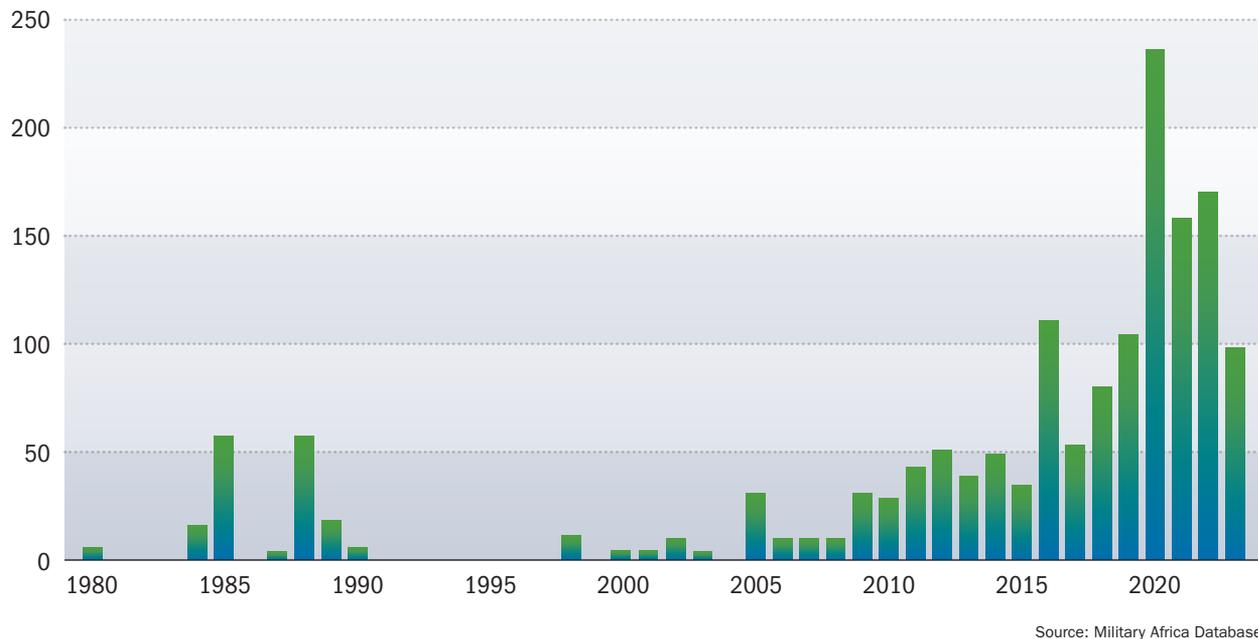
### Replacing Humans

The possibilities associated with the mass application of flying drones, also known as unmanned aerial systems, are immense and varied. Armed forces in Africa have used remotely piloted aircraft for years for reconnaissance and intelligence gathering. Using them as weapons has been a relatively recent innovation.

For years, armed drones were fixed-wing aircraft, about the size of a small conventional airplane. Piloted from the ground, they dropped their bombs and returned to their home air bases. They are commonly referred to as medium-altitude, long-endurance, or MALE, drones. The cost of these aircraft has dropped

Civilians fleeing the war in Sudan wait for asylum registration in South Sudan. The United Nations says the two rival generals fighting in Sudan have used drones indiscriminately, killing civilians. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## Exponential Growth in Combat Drone Imports by African Militaries (1980-2023)



significantly in recent years. The Africa Report says that earlier MALE drones ranged from about \$12 million to \$30 million each. Current Chinese-made craft can sell for as little as \$1 million.

In the past three years, drone warfare has added a different kind of device: small, cheap aircraft, typically quadcopters, that usually are sent on “suicide” missions.

**African countries are adapting commercial drones for their own uses. This drone in South Africa was fitted with a loudspeaker to disseminate messages during emergencies.**

REALTIME IMAGES/ABACA VIA REUTERS CONNECT



These often are adapted from over-the-counter commercial drones and can cost as little as \$300 apiece. If flown by an experienced handler, a 3-kilogram drone found in hobby and electronics shops can carry enough explosives to take out an armored vehicle, Andrii Fedorov, co-founder and CEO of Ukraine-based Nomad Drones, told The New York Post newspaper. Researchers say that some countries are selling inexpensive drones without regard for how they will be used.

“Drones offer sub-Saharan African militaries more affordable and flexible access to air power, which has been out of reach until now due to its cost and operational complexity,” said Djenabou Cisse of the Foundation for Strategic Research, as reported by France24. Countries such as China, Iran and Turkey have the advantage of selling drones “without attaching any political conditionality related to respect for human rights,” she added.

U.N. officials say the ethical use of armed drones has failed to keep up with advances in drone technology. Terrorist drone attacks on civilians often are deliberate, while government drone attacks on civilians are generally believed to be accidental. The result is the same: dead and wounded noncombatants. The U.N. says such drone use is a violation of the fundamental principle of international humanitarian law, which states that attacks may be directed only at military targets. The ongoing indiscriminate use of drones constitutes a war crime, the U.N. has concluded.

Civilian deaths in bombings generally can be attributed to three factors: incorrect intelligence, errors in explosive payload calibration and the imprecision of



Students look at a civilian drone in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Militaries and terrorists are adapting inexpensive commercially available drones.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



## Drones offer sub-Saharan African militaries more affordable and flexible access to air power, which has been out of reach until now due to its cost and operational complexity.”

~ Djenabou Cisse, Foundation for Strategic Research

using drones. The Africa Report says that “human and technical issues contribute to these deaths.”

As much or more than any other people in the world, the citizens of war-torn Sudan have seen devastating advances in drone warfare over the past two years. When the Sudanese civil war began in April 2023, military drones throughout Africa still were generally used only for surveillance and intelligence gathering. But since then, inexpensive over-the-counter drones have been converted into expendable soldiers that invade from above.

Death toll estimates for Sudan vary widely, with the Global Conflict Tracker estimating that there have been as many as 150,000 drone-related fatalities. More than 14 million have been forced from their homes, giving rise to the worst displacement crisis in the world. The U.N. says the country, as of mid-2025, also was in the midst of the “world’s largest hunger crisis.”

The U.N., responding to civilian deaths and maiming by drones, particularly in Ukraine and Sudan, says combatants are violating basic principles of human

decency. “International humanitarian law must be respected,” said U.N. Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher in May 2025. “Constant care must be taken to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure.”

### Geneva Conventions

International rules have been in place for 75 years to protect civilians from the reckless use of weapons and tactics. The Geneva Conventions, a series of treaties established in 1949, form the core of international humanitarian law to protect civilians and combatants during armed conflicts. The conventions include rules to ensure humane treatment of civilians and protect them from violence, torture and collective punishment.

Article 51 specifically states that, in warfare, the civilian population and individual civilians “shall enjoy general protection against dangers arising from military operations.” The treaty bans acts or threats of violence aimed at spreading terror among the civilian population. It also bans indiscriminate attacks, including those that are not directed at a specific military

objective. The ban includes attacks “that are of a nature to strike military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction.”

Although the treaty recognizes the realities of civilian losses in warfare, it forbids attacks that might be expected to kill or injure civilians and damage property, “which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.” It also bans reprisal attacks against civilians.

The treaty notes that civilians cannot be used “to render certain points or areas immune from military operations,” or to shield military objectives from attacks.

### A New Element in Warfare

Artificial intelligence is adding critical complications to the use of armed drones. The U.N. has described AI-equipped weapons as “‘killer robots,’ raining down death from the skies, deciding for themselves who they should attack.” Izumi Nakamitsu, head of the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs, says the use of such machines with “fully delegated power,” capable of making decisions to take human life, is “just simply morally repugnant” and should be banned by international law.

Human Rights Watch has said that the use of autonomous weapons is the latest, most serious example of “digital dehumanisation,” with AI making “life-altering decisions on matters affecting humans, such as policing, law enforcement and border control.”

“It’s very easy for machines to mistake human targets,” said Mary Wareham of Human Rights Watch, as reported by the U.N. “People with disabilities are at particular risk because of the way they move. Their

wheelchairs can be mistaken for weapons. There’s also concern that facial recognition technology and other biometric measurements are unable to correctly identify people with different skin tones. The AI is still flawed and it brings with it the biases of the people who programmed those systems.”

### Report: Protect Civilians

Death on Delivery outlined the effects armed drones have on civilians throughout the world. The report concluded with six recommendations to prevent their misuse. Although the report was written for the United Kingdom, its recommendations apply to any country dealing with armed drones:

- Countries selling drones — the report specifically mentions China, Iran and Turkey — should conduct fact-based investigations into the civilian harm that has arisen from the sale of their drone systems and make the findings public.
- Countries exporting drones capable of being armed should reaffirm their commitment to the protection of civilians in armed conflict and “undertake much more rigorous assessments” of the likelihood of civilian harm. Where there has been a history of civilian violations, exports should stop, the report says.
- The international community must quickly develop and implement “a new international control regime” that focuses on preventing harm from the proliferation of drone systems.



Smoke billows from a fuel depot after a drone attack at Port Sudan, Sudan. HANDOUT VIA REUTERS



Bomb shrapnel lies in the Ethiopian town of Lalibela after a drone attack in 2022. REUTERS



A mural in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, urges citizens to stay vigilant and mobile. Human Rights Watch says Burkina Faso's security forces have killed dozens of civilians in drone strikes.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

- Countries should work with other countries, nonprofit groups and victims' groups to establish strong international controls on the transfer and use of armed drones.
- Governments should assert the need for transparency, oversight and accountability in the use of armed drones by all countries, which should include recording casualties and helping victims.
- Countries should explicitly condemn extrajudicial killings using drones and affirm the applicability of international law, including the U.N. Charter, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The growing use of drones by terrorists and other armed nonstate actors in Africa indicates that the technological advantage that governments normally hold is being increasingly challenged, reports Nate Allen of the Africa Center.

"The weaponization of more widely accessible commercial drones may further benefit armed nonstate actors," he said in an April 2025 report. "To respond, African security forces will urgently need to adopt counter-drone capabilities." The proliferation of drones requires that African governments "develop a more complex understanding of the risks and limitations of using armed drones and adapt their doctrine accordingly," he wrote. "Drones are establishing themselves as the 21st century's defining military system. Managing the rapid proliferation of unmanned systems, however, will require sound strategic decisions on the part of human beings."

In a 2023 report, professor Christian Enemark of the University of Southampton in the U.K. said that although armed drones "are not inherently evil weapon systems," their use raises broader problems, including

unjust decisions to resort to violence in international affairs, indiscriminate methods of warfighting and inadequate human control over the operations.

Enemark listed five principles for the use of drones, beginning with a restriction that they should only be deployed in combination with ground-based military personnel, inhabited maritime vessels and/or inhabited aircraft. This principle, called "Combined Arms," is to prevent countries with drones "from resorting to violence too frequently." He added that armed drones should only be used to protect people "facing an imme-



**The weaponization of more widely accessible commercial drones may further benefit armed nonstate actors. To respond, African security forces will urgently need to adopt counter-drone capabilities."**

~ Nate Allen, Africa Center

diat threat of serious harm." His principles include keeping all drone use under "meaningful human control," and making sure there is public disclosure of where, why and how armed drones are used. He also said operators should have a right to "reasonably refuse" to use their drones as weapons.

"A drone-using state's commitment to follow international laws of war (for example, the law against targeting civilians) is only a minimal commitment to 'do the right thing,'" Enemark wrote. "From a moral perspective, it would be better to go beyond that. To address longstanding public concerns fully, users of armed drones should hold themselves to a higher standard: to exercise a greater degree of restraint with respect to what is presently required by law." □

# NIGERIAN NAVY ADDS TO FLEET

ADF STAFF

**T**he Nigerian Navy marked its 69th anniversary in 2025 by commissioning three patrol ships and three AW109 Trekker helicopters at a ceremony in Apapa, Lagos.

The newly commissioned ships are the NNS Shere, the NNS Faro and the NNS Ikogosi. Nigeria acquired two of the Sea Eagle-class vessels from Singapore and one from South Korea. All arrived in Nigeria in December 2024, according to defenceWeb.

The 38-meter vessels are designed to patrol Nigeria's coastal waters up to the 24-nautical-mile contiguous zone and are capable of extended operations. Their addition is expected to significantly improve the Navy's presence and rapid response at sea, the Nigerian Navy said.

The Ministry of Defence procured the three AW109 Trekker helicopters in late 2024, but like the new ships, they were not formally commissioned until mid-2025. They are equipped for a range of missions, including air reconnaissance, search and rescue, air insertion, and medical evacuation.

The fleet expansion comes as the Nigerian Navy continues to fight crude oil theft through efforts such as Operation Delta Sanity, and maintains a no-tolerance

policy on piracy. The new assets are designed to improve the Navy's ability to respond to emerging threats, protect national resources and contribute to regional stability, defenceWeb reported.

The Navy also opened new housing for its personnel, reflecting a holistic approach to improving operational readiness and welfare.

The commissioning ceremony included the inspection of ongoing projects in Lagos, showcasing the construction of Seaward Defence Boats IV and V at the Naval Dockyard Ltd. They are locally manufactured seagoing vessels constructed by Nigerian Navy shipbuilders and engineers. Builders completed the NNS Andoni in 2012 and the NNS Karaduwa in 2016. They finished the NNS Oji in 2021. The Navy still uses all three vessels. The fourth and fifth boats in the series are expected to be completed soon.

The Seaward Defence Boat is a fast class of patrol boat developed by Naval Dockyard Ltd. for the Nigerian Navy. The program designs and builds indigenous patrol vessels to improve maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, combat piracy and promote local shipbuilding. Initial plans called for 10 of the 43-meter-long vessels.



The Nigerian Navy inducts three offshore patrol vessels into service during a celebration commemorating its 69th anniversary. NIGERIAN NAVY



A Bell 412 fire-fighting helicopter refills water from a swimming pool near a wildfire.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

# Somalia

## Gets T-129 Attack Helicopters

DEFENCEWEB

**SOMALIA** has taken delivery of three T-129 attack helicopters from Turkey as part of growing Turkish support for the East African country's military.

The delivery included two utility helicopters for the Somali Navy as part of a defense agreement the two nations signed in February 2024, which allowed Turkey to establish a naval presence in Mogadishu. Turkey reportedly had been training Somali pilots to operate the T-129s for about a year. Soon after arriving in Somalia, the T-129s apparently were used to strike al-Shabaab targets, giving the Somali military precision attack capability. The aircraft have been seen flying over Mogadishu and other areas of the country.

The T-129 Atak is based on the Italian Agusta A129 Mangusta but features Turkish-developed avionics, mission software and weapons systems. The T-129 is powered by two turboshaft engines specifically designed for helicopters. It is equipped with a 20 mm three-barrel rotary cannon. It can carry weapons such as anti-tank missiles and 70 mm laser-guided missiles.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan told Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud that Turkey's counter-terrorism support to Somalia would be expanded, according to a statement. Al-Shabaab continues to launch attacks against civilian and government targets.

As of mid-2025, Turkey had about 500 troops in Somalia to support the Somali military. Several Turkish Bayraktar TB2 and Akinci aerial drones are used to support Somali and Turkish forces. At least two Akinci drones were delivered in March 2025. TB2s have been in service with the Somali National Army since 2022 and been used against al-Shabaab.

Turkey continues to strengthen its role in Somalia, signing an energy exploration agreement with the country. It has trained thousands of Somali troops and aims to train a third of the country's military forces.

# TUNISIA

## Orders 12 Multiuse Helicopters

DEFENCEWEB

**T**he Tunisian Air Force has ordered 12 Subaru Bell 412EPX helicopters for multirole military and security missions.

Bell Textron said the order will expand Tunisia's rotary wing fleet of 39 Bell aircraft, including Bell UH-1s, 205s and OH-58s. The Tunisian National Guard, meanwhile, recently began operating the Bell 429. Tunisia has been seeking new helicopters for two years.

The Bell 412EPX primarily is used for public safety, utility and military missions, including firefighting, law enforcement, search and rescue, medical transport, and general utility and cargo work. It also has been used for troop transport. Bell Textron said that more than 54% of the global Bell 412 fleet performs public and military missions.

The Subaru Bell 412EPX can carry a pilot and 14 passengers at a speed of 122 knots and out to 357 nautical miles. Power comes from two Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6T-9 engines rated at 1,122 horsepower for takeoff.

The new rotorcraft will increase Tunisia's already sizable and varied rotary wing fleet. According to the Scramble military aviation database, the Tunisian Air Force operates nearly 100 helicopters of various models. The National Guard uses three Bell 429s.

Two T-129 helicopters in flight





# AFRICAN NATIONS

## Turn to AI, Drones to Secure Borders

ADF STAFF

**South Africa** has joined Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Tunisia in deploying advanced technology, such as artificial intelligence and drones, to enhance border security.

South Africa's technology upgrade includes four quadcopter drones to monitor locations known for illegal crossings. The drones can operate around the clock and use infrared cameras to track people crossing at night. Laser range finders pinpoint the potential border crossers' location. A 10-day trial of the technology by South Africa's Border Management Authority resulted in a 61% increase in apprehensions of people crossing the border.

Experts believe that AI can help secure porous borders against traffickers, terrorists and illegal migration.

"The issue of artificial intelligence becomes very much fundamental, particularly when it comes to issues of your risk management, in terms of enhancing effective border management," South Africa's Commissioner of Border Security Michael Masiapato said in a video statement.

Adding AI to the border security mix lets security personnel analyze huge amounts of data collected at border crossings to predict potential threats and to deploy security personnel more effectively, according to Kithure Kindiki, Kenya's deputy president. Kindiki told a 2024 regional gathering on border security that AI has an important role to play in border protection.

"The use of technology, in particular digital technology, is crucial for future border control and management," Kindiki said. "Future border control management is going to be driven by data."

Experts with the African Union High-Level Panel

**South African authorities use a drone to monitor the country's border.**

LEON SCHREIBER/X

on Emerging Technologies recommend using AI to analyze border crossing images in real time and then securely store them for study and to share among agencies and nations.



**South Africa's Home Affairs Minister Leon Schreiber holds a drone that monitors the country's border.** LEON SCHREIBER/X

"In this way, this digital technology capability can help African countries better manage their borders against potential crimes," panel experts wrote in a 2021 blog post. "Adopting such measures can also secure peace and stability across the African continent."



## NIGERIA SHOWS OFF RIFLE-ARMED HEXACOPTER

ADF STAFF

**NIGERIA'S** Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) has built a rifle-armed hexacopter drone to perform surveillance and conduct precise combat strikes.

The drone, which was displayed at the African Air Forces Forum in Lagos, can climb to an altitude of 400 meters and cover 40 kilometers in 40 minutes. The name, "hexacopter," comes from its six arms, a design that supports an array of features.

The drone was made from about 70% local components, including hardware and software, reflecting a goal of self-sufficiency championed by the institute.

"This is not just about building drones," Professor M. Alimony, AFIT's director of research and development, told *The Guardian* newspaper. "It's about developing the ecosystem and capacity for Nigeria to respond to its own security and technological needs."

The hexacopter has integrated GPS, autopilot, communication and imaging systems. Its configuration supports operations including intelligence gathering and limited combat engagements.

AFIT displayed several other tools including a "smart mini spy vehicle" used for intelligence operations, a search and rescue device, and an unmanned vehicle for ground operations, *Military Africa* reported. The institute said it is focused on creating technology that meets Nigeria's unique security needs and allows the country's defense sector to become more independent of external suppliers.

"Our goal is to ensure that this technology is not only produced in Nigeria but belongs to Nigeria," Alimony said.

**Above:** A hexacopter drone armed with a rifle is displayed at the 4th African Air Forces Forum in Lagos, Nigeria, in May 2025. AFIT



## SENEGAL'S MILITARY, SPACE AGENCY SIGN COOPERATION AGREEMENT

ADF STAFF

**LEADERS** of Senegal's Armed Forces and Agency for Space Studies (ASES) signed a memorandum establishing a strategic cooperation framework between the defense and space sectors.

Leaders called the deal historic and said it is part of a trend on the continent of increasing collaboration between militaries and space agencies as countries recognize the importance of satellite technology for surveillance, secure communications and national security.

"We are taking a decisive step for the future today," Senegalese Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces Gen. Mbaye Cissé said at the June 2025 signing. "This memorandum is of major strategic significance."

Established in 2023, the ASES has grand ambitions. Senegalese engineers and technicians built the country's first satellite, the Gaindesat-1A, in collaboration with France's University Space Centre of Montpellier. The satellite was launched into orbit in 2024. The agency plans to launch five to seven satellites starting in 2028 and hopes to create a "Senegal Space Valley" as a hub for innovation.

"By creating ASES, the State of Senegal has a clear ambition: to make the space sector a cross-cutting lever to impact all areas, and security as a priority," said Maram Kairé, director-general of ASES. "This partnership will stimulate innovation, strengthen our sovereignty and build the skills of tomorrow."

The five-year defense sector agreement will receive technical support from Prométhée Earth Intelligence, a company that provides high-resolution, nearly real-time images of Earth.

Senegal is not alone in pairing the work of its defense and space sectors. Nigeria has created the Defence Space Administration to support national security through satellite use. Egypt launched a satellite known as TIBA-1 for military communication.



Senegalese Chief of General Staff Gen. Mbaye Cissé and Maram Kairé, director-general of the Senegalese Agency for Space Studies, signed a memorandum of understanding promoting cooperation. ASES

# ETHIOPIA, MOROCCO STRENGTHEN MILITARY TIES

ADF STAFF

**E**thiopia and Morocco signed a military cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening defense ties through joint training, exercises, scientific research and military health programs. The agreement establishes a joint military commission to oversee its implementation.

Ethiopia's Defense Minister Aisha Mohammed Mussa and Abdellatif Loudiyi, Morocco's minister in charge of the National Defense Administration signed the accord on June 17, 2025, in Rabat, Morocco.

Several weeks before the signing, Ethiopia hosted a high-level delegation of Moroccan officers at Homicho Ammunition Engineering Complex and the Ethiopian Air Force headquarters, where they were briefed on Ethiopia's efforts to improve defense manufacturing and operational readiness.

"Both Ethiopia and Morocco have committed to cooperating on the peace and security of Africa," Maj. Gen. Teshome Gemechu, Ethiopia's director-general of external relations and military cooperation, told Addis Media Network. "Military institutions from both nations have expressed a strong interest in sharing experiences, particularly in technology transfer, cybersecurity and the Navy."

Ethiopian Defense Minister Aisha Mohammed Mussa, right, attends a signing ceremony with Abdellatif Loudiyi, Morocco's minister in charge of the National Defense Administration.

ETHIOPIAN NEWS AGENCY

The move comes after a 2024 visit by Moroccan King Mohammed VI, during which the two countries signed a range of agreements on issues including air services, trade, taxation, investment, agriculture and renewable energy. Morocco has sought to deepen ties with Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years, particularly since it rejoined the African Union in 2017.

Ethiopia and Morocco share security goals such as stopping the spread of terror groups and shutting down organized crime networks that operate in North Africa and the Horn of Africa.

"By strengthening its military cooperation with Ethiopia, Morocco aims to secure common interests and block any attempt to threaten those interests, and to confront the common threats and challenges facing the African continent as a whole, such as organised crime and terrorism," journalist Mohammed Mamouni Al-Alawi wrote for the news website Atalayar.



## Ghana Plans \$1 Billion Military Investment, New Civilian Training Program

ADF STAFF

**In** a new initiative, Ghana offered college graduates the opportunity to experience what it is like to serve in the armed forces.

Interested graduates can register for a six-week basic training course that will test their discipline, resilience and teamwork, “while fostering a greater appreciation of national security imperatives,” the Ghana Armed Forces said.

An initial group of 10,000 volunteers is participating in the course that began August 31, 2025, and is designed to train young Ghanaians in emergency response, security and civic responsibility.

“This programme is not compulsory; it is voluntary,” then-Minister of Defence Dr. Edward Omani Boamah said. “Those who sign up will gain valuable life skills that go beyond military orientation. It’s about service, discipline and readiness to support national emergency efforts.”

All Ghanaian tertiary school graduates are required to complete 12 months of national service.

The Ghana Armed Forces also has announced a plan to recruit 12,000 new members over the next four years and invest \$1 billion to improve readiness and modernize. The 15-point plan includes new air assets, aerial drones, the construction of 10,000 housing units, new tactical vehicles, body armor and digital communications systems.

“Our strength lies in not just our arms, but in our unity, our resilience and our unwavering commitment to Ghana’s progress,” Boamah said while announcing the plan. “Let us march forward together with the Ghana Armed Forces as our guardians of peace and architects of prosperity.”

Members of the Ghana Armed Forces march during the Independence Day parade on March 6, 2025, in Accra.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

## Kenya Sends Message to Bandits With Destruction of Illegal Firearms

ADF STAFF

**T**he Kenya Defence Forces destroyed 6,000 illegal firearms in Ngong, Kajiado County, in an event attended by President William Ruto.

This action is part of the government’s fight against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that fuel banditry and intercommunal violence in parts of the country. The firearms were recovered between 2022 and 2025, with the majority voluntarily surrendered by the public through amnesty programs

and community disarmament campaigns. Officials also recovered a significant number in targeted security operations.

“I commend both our security agencies and responsible citizens, including religious and community leaders, whose civic-mindedness and patriotism have made this national milestone possible,” Ruto said. “Because of their efforts, our families, communities and nation are safer.”

Kenya is awash in illegal weapons with an estimated 650,000 in circulation. The arms fuel violence, particularly in the country’s Northern Rift region, where cattle rustling and disputes over pastures lead to bloodshed. More than 300 Kenyans died in cattle-rustling violence in one year, according to a 2024 National Crime Research Centre report.

The weapons destruction event coincided with the 20th anniversary of the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons, an international organization that supports disarmament initiatives in 15 nations in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes.

“A firearm in the wrong hands is not just a potent weapon, it is a direct assault on the safety of our citizens, the stability of our society and the peace we have worked so diligently to build,” Ruto said. “We will not allow violence to take root in our communities. Our commitment to disarming those who threaten our peace is unwavering.”

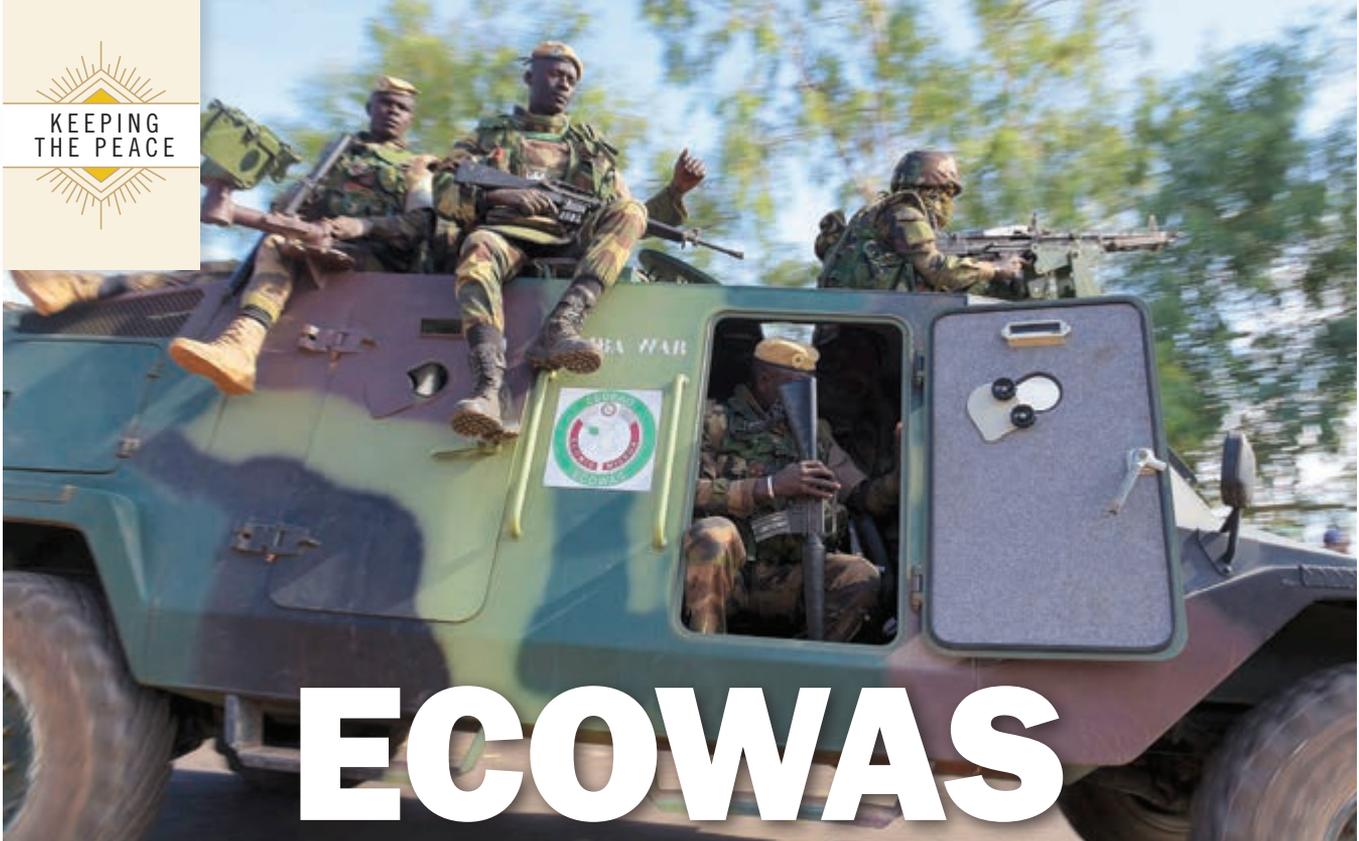


KENYA DEFENCE FORCES



Kenya’s Chief of Defence Forces Gen. Charles Kahariri, left, greets President William Ruto during an event to destroy illegal weapons.

KENYA DEFENCE FORCES



# ECOWAS

## Leads Peace, Security Initiative

ADF STAFF

**The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** and other groups have launched initiatives worth more than \$140 million to strengthen trade competitiveness and market access, and improve peace and security, institutional capacity, and trade in services throughout West Africa.

The initiatives support ECOWAS in addressing security and governance challenges by focusing on four elements: improving early conflict detection, security sector reform, electoral support and inclusive peace processes.

ECOWAS launched the initiatives, co-funded by the European Union, Germany and Spain, at an event at its headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria. It brought together more than 80 senior officials and partners from across West Africa and Europe, The Sierra Leone Telegraph reported. Other international organizations also are involved with the initiative.

“The ECOWAS Commission plays a pivotal role in ensuring regional cooperation, promoting integration in West Africa and maintaining peace and security,” said María Higón Velasco

of the Spanish embassy in Nigeria. “The projects presented today support the organization’s ability to conduct transparent dialogue and coordination with member states, development partners and civil society organizations in the region, thereby facilitating the achievement of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 goals.”

Vision 2050 established the ECOWAS Peace Fund to support initiatives for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and recovery “while developing the capacities of relevant stakeholders to promote durable peace and human security across the West Africa region.”

One part, the Africa Trade Competitiveness and Market Access Programme, will increase sustainable Africa-EU and intra-African trade by improving market access and trade competitiveness of West African businesses in “selected high-potential value chains,” the Telegraph reported.

“Strengthening intra-African trade within the African Continental Free Trade Area and strengthening Africa-EU trade

**Economic Community of West African States Soldiers patrol The Gambia during a mission to secure the country in 2017.** AFP/GETTY IMAGES

is more important than ever,” said Gerd Müller of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, as reported by the U.N. “It is key to create jobs, improve livelihoods, and to develop fair and sustainable regional and international supply chains.”

Pamela Coke-Hamilton of the International Trade Centre said one goal is to improve the competitiveness of West African small and medium-sized enterprises.

“These latest investments in the region, including through the Africa Trade Competitiveness and Market Access Programme, signals our shared commitment to a more resilient, prosperous West Africa, in line with priorities set by West African countries,” she said. “Together, we’ll work to unlock market access and boost the export competitiveness of small businesses in key sectors, supporting sustainable, trade-led development.”



## The Gambia, Liberia Share Peace Paths

UNITED NATIONS

Speakers from The Gambia, Liberia and the small Asian country of Timor-Leste shared their journeys from conflict to stability during a commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

“Over the past 20 years, the Peacebuilding Commission has supported more than 30 countries and regions,” helping advance national peacebuilding strategies and donor coordination, Germany’s Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Serap Güler said in her June 2025 opening remarks in New York.

The U.N. established the commission, an intergovernmental advisory body supporting peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict, in 2005. Although it does not deploy troops or run missions, the commission plays an essential advisory

A worker waters cashew plants outside a factory in Tanji, The Gambia, in June 2025. The country has made economic strides since reforms began in 2017.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

and coordinating role, focusing on the long-term dimensions of peace, including governance, justice, reconciliation, institution-building and sustainable development. It comprises 31 member countries.

“Today, The Gambia proudly shares its experience as a testament to

what can be achieved through effective multilateral cooperation, national ownership and the resilience of a people determined to forge a new path,” said then-Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mamadou Tangara. He said the commission’s intervention at a critical juncture in The Gambia’s history was not only historic but also a defining example of preventive diplomacy and international solidarity.

The Gambia emerged from more than two decades of governance challenges and repression, launching a national effort to restore democracy, human rights and the rule of law. After the 2017 political impasse, the Gambian government initiated a comprehensive transition toward democratic governance and resilience, and sought support from the commission, a partnership that proved instrumental in enabling a peaceful democratic transition.

Former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, told a similar story about her country.

“Liberia’s story is one of pain, but also of promise — a nation once brought to its knees by protracted conflict now stands as a testimony to what is possible when national will is matched by international solidarity,” she said in a video message.

## African Union Council Calls for South Sudan Peace

ADF STAFF

The African Union Peace and Security Council has reaffirmed its commitment to the South Sudan peace process and has called for renewed dialogue.

Innocent Shiyo of Tanzania reiterated the collective responsibility of the council and all stakeholders to protect the achievements of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. He said that although progress has been made, “the comprehensive implementation of the agreement remains hindered by persistent political disagreements and security challenges,” the Daily News of Tanzania reported.

South Sudan’s political and security landscape has continued to deteriorate since renewed violence erupted in March 2025, with an attack on the South Sudan People’s Defence Forces base in Nasir by the militia group known as the White Army. It is reportedly associated with the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-In Opposition. The attack is regarded as the biggest setback since the adoption of the agreement in 2018, according to the research group Amani Africa.

“The situation has since devolved into military confrontations, high-level arrests, deployment of Ugandan troops and increased violence,” Amani Africa reported. “These developments have gravely undermined the transitional process.”

At an AU meeting in June 2025 in Ethiopia, Shiyo said that in partnership with regional groups and the United Nations, the AU has engaged in sustained diplomatic efforts to rebuild trust and promote dialogue, underscoring the continent’s commitment to South Sudan’s peace process. He called upon the leadership of South Sudan to demonstrate renewed and demonstrable commitment to the full and faithful implementation of the resolution, regarded as the most legitimate and inclusive framework for advancing national reconciliation, democratic transition and

sustainable peace, the Daily News reported.

AU officials said the escalation in violence has included Nasir and surrounding areas in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity states, which threatens to unravel the fragile gains achieved under the resolution. The council has strongly condemned ceasefire violations and human rights abuses, including the detention of political leaders and targeted attacks on civilians. The council has emphasized the need to safeguard the integrity of the peace agreement by ensuring the immediate release and reinstatement of political detainees.

South Sudanese military police officers monitor an area near Juba.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ESCOLA DE CONDUÇÃO MILITAR  
DE  
MAPUTO



Thirty Mozambican military personnel completed a maintenance training program with European instructors.

EUROPEAN UNION MILITARY ASSISTANCE  
MISSION IN MOZAMBIQUE

## Tech Training Boosts Skills for **MOZAMBIKAN FORCES**

ADF STAFF

The Armed Forces for the Defense of Mozambique is partnered with European trainers to advance military, mechanical and technical expertise in a three-week logistics maintenance program.

A mentoring and training team from the French Armed Forces in the Southern Indian Ocean Zone, headquartered on Réunion, worked with the resident European Union Military Assistance Mission in Mozambique to manage the program for Mozambican forces, also known as FADM, defenceWeb reported. The program provided hands-on maintenance training for 30 mechanics at the Maputo military driving school.

The EU mission also conducted a transport supply and management program at the school, improving the skill levels of one officer and 30 noncommissioned officers. The program was designed to strengthen logistic capabilities in increasingly demanding operational contexts by equipping personnel with key skills to ensure effective movement, sustainment and resupply of forces.

The EU mission also manages an administrative command elements program prepared specifically for FADM personnel. Officials said the administrative program is “a concrete investment in modernisation of FADM command structure and administrative efficiency.”

A follow-up administrative program dealt with subjects including counterterrorism, civil-military cooperation, international humanitarian rights law and military medical aspects, defenceWeb reported.

The EU established the mission in 2021 to help with the ongoing problems in Cabo Delgado province, which has been plagued with violence, cyclones and social unrest. The mission supports peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and support for “dialogue, humanitarian aid and development cooperation,” according to the United Nations. The mission also trains and supports Mozambique’s armed forces to protect civilians and restore security. The EU has extended the mission through June 2026.

# Somalia, AU Retake Villages

DEFENCEWEB

The Somali Army and the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia have worked together to reclaim strategic villages from the terrorist group al-Shabaab.

Soldiers in Silent Storm, a three-day joint operation, recaptured the villages of Anole and Sabiid. AU Mission officials said the operation was to liberate areas controlled by the terrorist group.

“Several Al-Shabaab fighters were neutralised during a prolonged siege of their hideouts in the villages,” said a news release, adding that the joint forces “seized a substantial amount of ammunition from fleeing militants.” The joint task force also removed improvised explosive devices planted in communities and along supply routes.

Ugandan Brig. Gen. Joseph Semwanga said the region was targeted because “it had become a strategic location since March, where terrorists plan deadly attacks, conceal ammunition, including vehicles for vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and established illegal checkpoints to extort locals.”

In the wake of the initial three-day operation, Soldiers secured the recaptured areas and villages and cleared pockets of al-Shabaab terrorists from Lower Shabelle’s Afgooye district, according to Maj. Gen. Sahal Abdullahi Omar, Somalia land forces commander.

The AU established the latest mission in January 2025, taking over from the AU Transition Mission in Somalia. The mission focuses on supporting Somali security forces, degrading terrorist groups such as al-Shabaab, stabilizing recovered areas, and preparing Somalia to assume full security responsibility.

The authorized strength has been up to 12,000 uniformed personnel, including 680 police officers. The mission has been severely underfunded since its inception, with a \$73.7 million shortfall as of June 2025.

Somali National Army trainees drill at a base north of Mogadishu in April 2025.

GETTY IMAGES



## Cooperation Key to Reducing Piracy, Study Says

DEFENCEWEB

Although there has been a drop in piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, seafarers still face “significant risks,” the International Maritime Bureau warned in a report about piracy and armed robbery against ships.

Members of the Djiboutian Coast Guard perform a piracy interdiction drill in May 2025.

SPC. MICHEALA MALDONADO/  
U.S. ARMY

The report covered the first six months of 2025 and pointed to the Singapore Strait as the world’s current piracy and armed robbery hot spot, with 57 incidents. That’s up from 15 incidents for the same period in 2024. The 98-nautical-mile strait between the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca accounted for more than 60% of all globally reported incidents, according to the bureau.

Worldwide, 90 incidents of piracy and armed robbery were reported in the first half of 2025, a 50% increase compared to the same period in 2024 and the highest number of reported incidents for corresponding periods since 2020. Pirates boarded 79 vessels, including four hijackings, attempted six other attacks and fired on one vessel. As far as ships’ crew members were concerned, 40 were taken hostage, 16 kidnapped, five threatened, three assaulted and the same number injured.

The Gulf of Guinea remains an area for extreme caution. Twelve incidents and 87% of all kidnappings were reported in the Gulf of Guinea between January and June 2025. The bureau said strong cooperation from West African authorities and international navies in the Gulf was essential in improving maritime security.

“Incidents in the Gulf of Guinea continue to remain at low levels with regional authorities commended for their efforts and encouraged to sustain them,” the bureau said. “Twelve incidents were reported, compared to 10 and 14 in the same period over the past two years. While this trend is worth aspiring to, crew safety and well-being are not yet guaranteed.”

The bureau said positive action taken by international navies in the Gulf of Aden, and off the eastern/southern Somali coast, Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and other areas, including preemptive and disruptive counterpiracy tactics, had reduced the number of attacks.





# CLUES

- 1 This site, in what is now Kenya, was one of the most important Swahili cities in East Africa from the 10th to the 17th centuries.
- 2 The settlement had two rings of walls, public and private buildings, tombs, and a palace complex and mosque.
- 3 Domestic, civic and religious buildings were laid out in a grid street pattern within the inner walls. The space between inner and outer walls held modest houses where most residents lived.
- 4 Evidence of luxury goods imported from China, India, Persia and Venice demonstrates the city's role in international trade networks.



# SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

## Want to be published?

Africa Defense Forum (ADF) is a professional military magazine that serves as an international forum for military and security specialists in Africa.

The magazine is published quarterly by U.S. Africa Command and covers topics such as counterterrorism strategies, security and defense operations, transnational crime, and issues affecting peace, stability, good governance and prosperity.

The forum allows for an in-depth discussion and exchange of ideas. We want to hear from people in our African partner nations who understand the interests and challenges on the continent. Submit an article for publication in ADF, and let your voice be heard.

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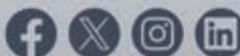
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